

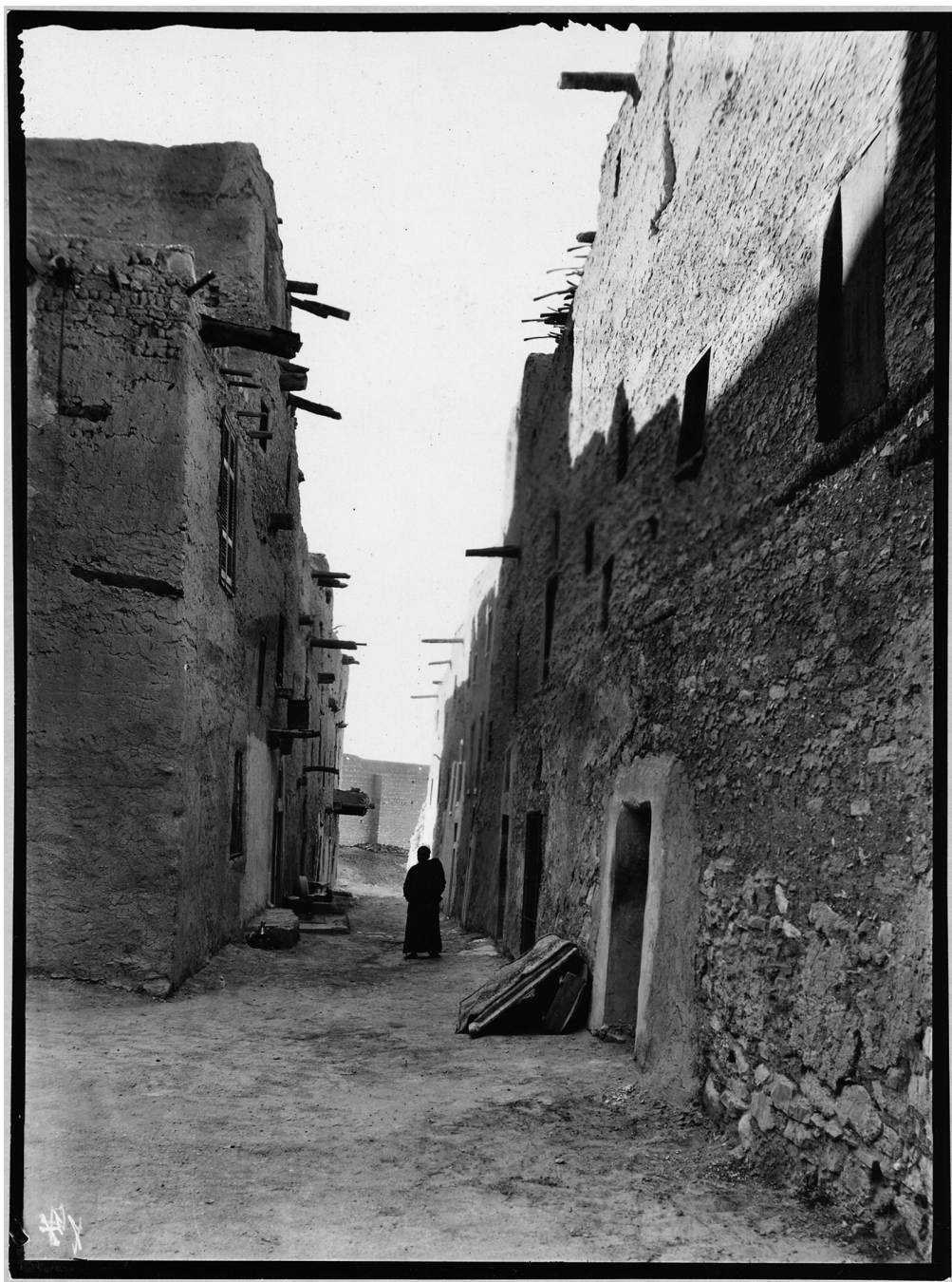
THE MONASTIC LANDSCAPE OF LATE ANTIQUE EGYPT

Darlene L. Brooks Hedstrom offers a new history of the field of Egyptian monastic archaeology. It is the first study in English to trace how scholars identified a space or site as monastic within the Egyptian landscape and how such identifications impacted perceptions of monasticism. Brooks Hedstrom then provides an ecohistory of Egypt's tripartite landscape to offer a reorientation of the perception of the physical landscape. She analyzes Late Antique documentary evidence, early monastic literature, and ecclesiastical history before turning to the extensive archaeological evidence of Christian monastic settlements. In doing so, she illustrates the stark differences between the idealized monastic landscape and the actual monastic landscape that was urbanized through monastic constructions. Drawing on critical theories in landscape studies, materiality, and phenomenology, Brooks Hedstrom looks at domestic settlements of nonmonastic and monastic settlements to posit what features make monastic settlements unique, thus offering a new history of monasticism in Egypt.

Darlene L. Brooks Hedstrom is Professor of History and Director of Archaeology at Wittenberg University. A fellow in Byzantine Studies, her research on Byzantine monastic Egypt has earned her awards from the Fulbright Binational Commission in Egypt, the American Research Center in Egypt, the National Endowment for the Humanities, the Erasmus Institute, and Project Grants in Byzantine Studies from Dumbarton Oaks. Her publications center on the archaeology and history of monastic settlements in the Byzantine Near East with a particular focus on Egypt. She is currently Senior Archaeological Consultant for the Yale Monastic Archaeology Project in Wadi al-Natrun and former Director of Archaeology for the Yale Monastic Archaeology Projects also in Wadi al-Natrun and in Sohag, Egypt.

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Cover. Kazazian. Black-and-white photograph taken during the Byzantine Institute's expedition to the Red Sea Monastery of St. Antony of Egypt, c. 1929–1931. MS.BZ.004-A14. "View of street from the south."

THE MONASTIC LANDSCAPE OF LATE ANTIQUITY EGYPT

AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL
RECONSTRUCTION

DARLENE L. BROOKS HEDSTROM

Wittenberg University, Ohio



CAMBRIDGE
UNIVERSITY PRESS

CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS

University Printing House, Cambridge CB2 8BS, United Kingdom

One Liberty Plaza, 20th Floor, New York, NY 10006, USA

477 Williamstown Road, Port Melbourne, VIC 3207, Australia

314–321, 3rd Floor, Plot 3, Splendor Forum, Jasola District Centre, New Delhi – 110025, India

79 Anson Road, #06-04/06, Singapore 079906

Cambridge University Press is part of the University of Cambridge.

It furthers the University's mission by disseminating knowledge in the pursuit of education, learning, and research at the highest international levels of excellence.

www.cambridge.org

Information on this title: www.cambridge.org/9781107161818

DOI: 10.1017/9781316676653

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First published 2017

Printed in the United States of America by Sheridan Books, Inc.

A catalogue record for this publication is available from the British Library.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Names: Brooks Hedstrom, Darlene L., author.

Title: The monastic landscape of late antique Egypt: an archaeological reconstruction / Darlene L. Brooks Hedstrom, Wittenberg University, Ohio.

Description: Cambridge, United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press, 2017. |

Includes bibliographical references and index.

Identifiers: LCCN 2017007185 | ISBN 9781107161818 (hardback)

Subjects: LCSH: Monasteries – Egypt. | Coptic monasteries. | Cultural landscapes – Egypt. | Christian antiquities – Egypt. | Egypt – Antiquities. | Monasticism and religious orders – Egypt – History.

Classification: LCC BR133.E31 B76 2017 | DDC 271.00932–dc23

LC record available at <https://lcn.loc.gov/2017007185>

ISBN 978-1-107-16181-8 Hardback

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For my teacher and mentor
Alfred J. Hoerth

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PREFACE

The cover of this volume shows a photograph of a monk walking down a main corridor at the St. Paul Monastery by the Red Sea in 1931. The photograph was part of the documentation of the Byzantine art and architecture at the Red Sea monasteries in Egypt for the Thomas Whittemore Expedition, which was sponsored by the Byzantine Institute in America in Washington, DC. The artwork, photographs, text, and silent film were not published extensively but are all available for study at the Image Collections and Fieldwork Archives at Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection in Washington, DC.

The monastic landscape in this photograph, taken by Kazazian, does not contain buildings from the Late Antique period for the buildings were not dated at the time. We see a monk carrying something unknown as he walks down a row of monastic residences. We see the cobblestones used to make a wall, the palm trunks jutting out of the walls at various lengths, the plaster that encases the doors, and the wooden frames of windows. We also see the clutter in the path filled with various items whose function is unknown to us as presented in the photograph. Read together, these various items are the same, main elements of this archaeological study of Egyptian monasticism. This is a book about buildings, materials, and monks and how they worked together to create a new landscape in Late Antique Egypt. Like this photograph that pulls the various details together in a single frame, this book pulls together a variety of different sources to create an impression of a similar image in Late Antique monasticism.

Historians and papyrologists are sometimes better equipped with their resources to repopulate the ancient landscape with the activities of the elites through their writings and archives. Archaeologists, on the other hand, work with the artifacts of unnamed and unknown individuals who built foundations, plastered walls, and cooked meals. Archaeology can provide a wider range of materials that allow one to see the ways in which humans have transformed and responded to the natural environment. This book seeks to illustrate how both material remains and the written sources may be woven together to blur the methodological divisions that have traditionally separated history, art history, papyrology, and archaeology.

As a study of the monastic landscape in Egypt, I am addressing the fact that much of the archaeological study of Late Antique Egypt is in need of a theoretical turn. Since the 1970s, archaeology has moved away from a descriptive, culture-based study of the remains to one that seeks to address major questions about how archaeology reflects ideas and beliefs. Theoretical developments in landscape, materiality, ecohistory, and cultural geography offer effective models for looking at evidence in new ways. As I demonstrate, even asking the question of what makes a site monastic has not been clear. One of the advances in archaeological theory is the recognition of the role that excavators had and do have in the interpretation of the evidence. Therefore, my study of the Egyptian landscape begins not with Late Antiquity, but rather with the nineteenth and twentieth centuries during which perceptions of the monastic built environment, as evinced by the 1931 photograph, created a *mindscape* of monasticism. The mindscape was one in which the intellectual and scholarly engagement with monastic material was shaped by the adoption of the mythologized desert of the Egyptian Desert Fathers present in a number of Christian and monastic literary works. The mindscape painted a portrait of monasticism that was remote, severe, and isolationist in a harsh and other-worldly landscape. Yet, the mindscape was in fact not grounded in the physical reality of the actual Egyptian desertscape, and thus the monastic landscape was one that was, until now, poorly reconstructed. The monastic mindscape was one of simple constructions, located in pharaonic spaces or in the desert as a way to retreat from the world and to destroy Egypt's pagan past. Viewers anticipated structures reflecting poor craftsmanship, grafted into an unforgiving landscape, and one very separate and segregated from the civilization by the Nile.

In reality, the Egyptian Late Antique desertscape was nearby the Nile and its prominent canals. In many cases the sharply rising desert cliffs framed and protected the cultivated fields, and both were easily accessible by boat and by foot. Egypt's Late Antique landscape was also dynamic with changing authorities and a slew of new construction and remodeling efforts. The Late Antique desert was therefore an occupied landscape filled with a variety of spiritual beings, of migrant communities of laborers, and of entrepreneurs building monastic villages. While early and medieval monastic literature may cast the changing landscape as the work of divine architects, the actual monastic landscape as found in documentary and archaeological sources is quite different.

In the chapters that follow I argue for a shift in methodological focus from a *mindscape* of monasticism, to a *desertscape* of monasticism, to conclude with a *landscape* of monasticism reconstructed from the extensive and highly diverse Egyptian monastic communities. The monk on the cover is a reminder that it

is possible to recreate the living monastic community through reading materials, objects, and text together. By employing archaeological theories for understanding space, landscape, materials, and community identity we can come closer to reconstructing late antique monastic communities in a more sophisticated and comprehensive way that moves us closer to having a new frame to encompass Egyptian monastic landscapes.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This project began as a desire to better understand how Egypt's landscape transformed with the building activities sponsored by monastic communities. This is my effort to get a sense of the past through the bricks, rooms, and spaces made by monks and *why* they built what they did. As an archaeologist I have always worked with the aim to understand spaces by examining how those spaces were built, used, and regarded in the past. Our ability to deeply understand the social, cultural, and religious factors influencing how monastic space is made is severely hampered by our distance from these worlds, but the combination of buildings, documentary evidence, and monastic literature makes it possible to examine these topics. Fortunately, I have benefited from the tremendous support and encouragement of a variety of institutions, colleagues, friends, and family as I explored these topics.

The majority of the research for this volume came through several seasons of permission from the Supreme Council of Antiquities in Egypt. The support of this institution has facilitated my excavation work in Egypt since 1996 and granted permission for me to visit sites to study the landscape of monastic Egypt. During many of my trips I was given lodging and food at a variety of Coptic monasteries; I am grateful for the many modern monastic communities that opened their doors to me. Financial and logistical support for many site visits came from the Binational Fulbright Commission in Egypt, when I was a Fulbright Scholar in 2007–2008, and the United States Department of State, Bureau of Educational & Cultural Affairs (ECA) Fellowship with the American Research Center in Egypt in 1998–1999. A recent fellowship in Byzantine Studies at Dumbarton Oaks in Washington, DC provided an ideal space to consider the entirety of the project in its final stages. Wittenberg University, my home institution, has generously supported my work and travel to Egypt in numerous ways through sabbatical leave, small grants, and support for this research.

A variety of institutions provided library access for research, permissions for images included in this book, and inspiring spaces for writing – I do have a fondness for space, after all. For permission and assistance with archival material and access to images for publication I appreciate the support from the following library and museum institutions: American Research Center in

Egypt; British Museum; Cleveland Art Museum; Deutsches Archäologisches Institut Kairo; École Pratique des Hautes Études; Egypt Exploration Society; Franklin Pierce University; Gertrude Bell Archives at Newcastle University; Image Collections and Fieldwork Archives at Dumbarton Oaks Research Center and Library; Institut Français d'Archéologie Orientale du Caire; Keene State College; Louvre Museum; Metropolitan Museum of Art; Netherlands-Flemish Institute in Cairo; New York Public Library; Oriental Institute at the University of Chicago; Pierpont Morgan Library; Rare Book Library at the American University in Cairo; and University of Virginia Special Collections. The Thomas Library staff at Wittenberg University deserve special recognition for their heroic efforts to acquire numerous articles and volumes I needed in order to undertake my work. I am grateful that they pursued my requests with professionalism and speed. Over the course of writing, several student faculty aides have assisted me; I appreciate their willing enthusiasm and diligence for a job that at times must have been onerous.

I am deeply grateful to the following colleagues who provided access to images or offered support throughout the writing process: Dominique Bénazeth, Deb Brown, Marica Cassis, Drew Cayton, Judith de Luce, Georgia Frank, Gawdat Gabra, Włodzimierz Godlewski, Charlotte Goldy, Matthew Gordon, Susan Ashbrook Harvey, Fotini Kondyli, Kostis Kourelis, Margaret Mullett, Donald Reid, Philip Rousseau, Alice-Mary Talbot, and Edwin Yamauchi.

Throughout my excavation work in Egypt I have benefited from friendships and engaging colleagues, whose counsel and numerous conversations about the material remains of monasticism have enriched my ability to think deeply about the issues facing the study of monastic archaeology. I wish to thank Heather Badamo, Louise Blanke, Elizabeth S. Bolman, David Brakke, Doug Burton-Christie, Stephen J. Davis, Gawdat Gabra, James Goehring, Peter Grossmann, Tomasz Herbich, Salima Ikram, Karel C. Innemée, Chrysi Kotsifou, Dawn McCormack, Elisabeth R. O'Connell, Gillian Pyke, Caroline Schroeder, Agnes Szymanska, Hany Takla, Janet Timbie, Tim Vivian, Nelly van Doorn-Harder, Bastiaan Van Elderen, Nicholas Warner, and Jennifer Westerfeld.

I wish to thank friends and colleagues who have helped nudge this project along at various stages. Derek Alvarado, Ginta Carlson, Margaret DeButy, Laura Harrison, Melissa Heston, Natalie Koukis, Cheryl Levine, Amy Livingstone, Mike Mattison, Kent McConnell, Nancy McHugh, Dan McInnis, Tammy Proctor, Scott Rosenberg, Thomas T. Taylor, Teresa Troyer, Cy Wilkerson, and Molly Wood have enthusiastically encouraged my work and spent many hours offering good humor to balance the demands of life, writing, and research. In particular, both Maged S.A. Mikhail and Christian Raffensperger deserve special recognition for offering a constant supply of insightful advice and patience;

they have both endured long conversations about what makes monastic space monastic, and I deeply appreciate their friendship and historical insight.

My family has generously sustained me over the years as the book emerged slowly from several seasons of fieldwork. My mother, Alyce L. Brooks, my in-laws, Herbert and Louise Hedstrom, and my extended family (Elizabeth Hedstrom, Matthew Hedstrom, Sarah Mullen, and Scott Ward) have provided much-needed refreshment from the work over the years and kindly created spaces for me to work during many family gatherings. In particular, the lion's share of my gratitude is for my husband, Mark, and my lovely son, Silas, who continues to see soccer as far more important than mud bricks. They have traveled with me to projects in Egypt, have withstood my needed absences from family life with patience, and have waited for me to finally finish. Their love, laughter, and support has provided a wonderful refuge from work when I needed it most.

Finally, I dedicate this work to my mentor, colleague, and friend, Alfred J. Hoerth. As my undergraduate advisor in archaeology at Wheaton College he opened my eyes to the Middle East in ways that always welcomed my interests in the archaeology of daily life. As a well-seasoned field archaeologist for the Oriental Institute and a first-rate teacher at Wheaton, he always encouraged me to pursue work in Egypt. Over the years he has offered keen advice and support. His continued friendship is a treasure that has sustained me in numerous ways. As his student, I offer this book as recognition of my appreciation for all he has given me as a blessing.

NOTES ON THE TEXT

In large part I follow the nomenclature for sites found in Roger S. Bagnall and Dominic W. Rathbone's *Egypt From Alexander to the Early Christians: An Archaeological and Historical Guide* (Los Angeles: John Paul Getty Museum, 2004) and Peter Grossmann, *Christliche Architektur in Ägypten* (Leiden, the Netherlands: Brill, 2002). In the listing of monastic settlements in the index I provide a site's Arabic name as found in A. Atiya's *Coptic Encyclopedia*, now updated and available at Claremont Graduate School (<http://ccdlibraries.claremont.edu/cdm/landingpage/collection/cce>), and edited by Karen J. Torjesen and Gawdat Gabra.

In the cases of the monastic sites I discuss, I introduce their names as they appear in the literature and also supply the site names that the communities had for themselves, when known.

ABBREVIATIONS

Papyri are referenced according to the standardized abbreviations found in John F. Oates, et al., *Checklist of Editions of Greek, Latin, Demotic and Coptic Papyri, Ostraca and Tablets* (Oxford: Oxbow, 2001). For digital images and/or transcriptions of many of the papyri referenced, see Papyri.info (<http://papyri.info>).

<i>AA</i>	<i>Archäologischer Anzeiger</i>
<i>AI</i>	<i>Annales islamologiques</i>
<i>AJA</i>	<i>American Journal of Archaeology</i>
<i>AN</i>	<i>Analecta Bollandiana</i>
<i>ANRW</i>	<i>Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt</i>
<i>ARA</i>	<i>Annual Review of Anthropology</i>
<i>AS</i>	<i>Ancient Society</i>
<i>ASAE</i>	<i>Annales du service des antiquités de l'Égypte</i>
<i>AW</i>	<i>Antike Welt</i>
<i>BARCE</i>	<i>Bulletin of the American Research Center in Egypt</i>
<i>BASOR</i>	<i>Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research</i>
<i>BASP</i>	<i>Bulletin of the American Society of Papyrologists</i>
<i>BIFAO</i>	<i>Bulletin de l'Institut français d'archéologie orientale</i>
<i>BJMES</i>	<i>British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies</i>
<i>BSAC</i>	<i>Bulletin de la société d'archéologie copte</i>
<i>BSFE</i>	<i>Bulletin da la société française d'Égyptologie</i>
<i>BSGE</i>	<i>Bulletin de la société de géographie d'Égypte (Cairo)</i>
<i>ByzF</i>	<i>Byzantinische Forschungen</i>
<i>ByzZ</i>	<i>Byzantinische Zeitschrift</i>
<i>BZG</i>	<i>Baseler Zeitschrift für Geschichte und Altertumskunde</i>
<i>CAJ</i>	<i>Cambridge Archaeological Journal</i>
<i>CCR</i>	<i>Coptic Church Review</i>
<i>CdE</i>	<i>Chronique d'Égypte</i>
<i>CE</i>	<i>The Coptic Encyclopedia, Aziz Atiya, ed.</i>
<i>CH</i>	<i>Church History</i>
<i>CRAIB</i>	<i>Comptes rendus de l'Académie des inscriptions et Belles-Lettres</i>
<i>CSQ</i>	<i>Cistercian Studies Quarterly</i>
<i>DOP</i>	<i>Dumbarton Oaks Papers</i>

EA	<i>Egyptian Archaeology</i>
ECA	<i>Egyptian Christian Art</i>
GM	<i>Göttinger Miszellen</i>
GRBS	<i>Greek, Roman, and Byzantine Studies</i>
HTR	<i>Harvard Theological Review</i>
IFAO	<i>Institut français d'archéologie orientale</i>
JAAR	<i>Journal of the American Academy of Religion</i>
JAC	<i>Jahrbuch für Antike und Christentum</i>
JAR	<i>Journal of Archaeological Research</i>
JARCE	<i>Journal of the American Research Center in Egypt</i>
JAS	<i>Journal of Archaeological Science</i>
JBL	<i>Journal of Biblical Literature</i>
JCS	<i>Journal of Coptic Studies</i>
JCSCS	<i>Journal of the Canadian Society for Coptic Studies</i>
JEA	<i>Journal of Egyptian Archaeology</i>
JECS	<i>Journal of Early Christian Studies</i>
JEH	<i>Journal of Ecclesiastical History</i>
JESHO	<i>Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient</i>
JFA	<i>Journal of Field Archaeology</i>
JHS	<i>Journal of Hellenic Studies</i>
JJP	<i>Journal of Juristic Papyrology</i>
JJSEA	<i>Journal of the Society for the Study of Egyptian Antiquities</i>
JLA	<i>Journal of Late Antiquity</i>
JMEMS	<i>Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies</i>
JNES	<i>Journal of Near Eastern Studies</i>
JNG	<i>Jahrbuch für Numismatik und Geldgeschichte</i>
JOAI	<i>Jahreshefte des Österreichischen Archäologischen Instituts</i>
JOB	<i>Jahrbuch der Österreichischen Byzantinistik</i>
JRA	<i>Journal of Roman Archaeology</i>
JRS	<i>Journal of Roman Studies</i>
JSA	<i>Journal of Social Archaeology</i>
JSAH	<i>Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians</i>
JTS	<i>Journal of Theological Studies</i>
MDAIK	<i>Mitteilungen des Deutschen Archäologischen Instituts, Cairo</i>
MIFAO 12	Clédat 1906
MIFAO 13	Chassinat 1911
MIFAO 39	Clédat 1916
MIFAO 59	Maspero/Drioton 1931
MIFAO 111	Clédat 1999
MS	<i>Mediaeval Studies</i>
OA	<i>Oriens Antiquus</i>
OAth	<i>Opuscula Atheniensia</i>

OC	<i>Oriens Christianus</i>
OJA	<i>Oxford Journal of Archaeology</i>
OLA	<i>Orientalia Lovaniensia Analecta</i>
ORom	<i>Opuscula Romana</i>
OSAPh	<i>Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy</i>
PAM	<i>Polish Archaeology in the Mediterranean</i>
Par Or	<i>Parole de l'Orient</i>
PCPhS	<i>Proceedings of the Cambridge Philological Society</i>
RA	<i>Revue archéologique</i>
RAC	<i>Rivista di archeologia cristiana</i>
RB	<i>Revue biblique</i>
REByz	<i>Revue des études byzantines</i>
RRE	<i>Religion in the Roman Empire</i>
SAC	<i>Société d'archéologie copte</i>
Saqqara II	Quibell, 1908
Saqqara III	Quibell, 1909
Saqqara IV	Quibell, 1912
VChr	<i>Vigiliae Christianae</i>
WA	<i>World Archaeology</i>
ZAS	<i>Zeitschrift für Ägyptische Sprache und Altertumskunde</i>
ZATW	<i>Zeitschrift für die Alttestamentliche Wissenschaft</i>
ZPE	<i>Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik</i>

INTRODUCTION

AN ANONYMOUS BRITISH TRAVELER TO SOUTHERN EGYPT IN 1824 DESCRIBED the Egyptian landscape of the island of Philae as overrun with remnants of the past. It was so much so that “[a]t every step you tread on some fragment of antiquity” (see Fig. 1).¹ Early maps and photographs of the island show the presence of substantial mud brick structures filling the court of the colonnades south of the Birthhouse of the Temple of Isis and elsewhere on the island. Yet, these remains held little interest for later visitors as the “crude-brick ruins which cover the island,” according to John Murray’s 1888 travel guide, “are mostly of Christian time.”² It would not be long before all the Christian remains were removed to make the site more enjoyable for tourists who wished to see the Ptolemaic and Roman monuments. Why was Egypt’s post-pharaonic, and in particular its Christian, monastic past literally stripped away from the landscape after the nineteenth century?

This book examines the Late Antique and modern perceptions of the monastic built environment. It revises late nineteenth-century notions that the monastic desert landscape was empty, poorly constructed, and isolated (the general landscape) into a landscape that was dynamic, extremely diverse in form, and highly engaged with Late Antique communities (the actual landscape). I present evidence for how perceptions of the monastic built environment and its builders transformed the Late Antique landscape. It looks at how monastic authors saw great diversity in what monks built and yet how modern authors and viewers of Egypt’s landscape reduced monasticism to



1. Mud brick remains by the Grand Temple of Isis at Philae, c. late nineteenth century.

a simple evolutionary model of occupation. I employ contemporary reading strategies from landscape archaeology, cultural geography, and materiality studies to construct a phenomenological approach that highlights how Late Antique viewers saw the monastic built environment and its landscape. With this foundation I introduce readers to a selection of monastic sites to illustrate the diversity of the archaeological evidence present in Egypt and to provide a heuristic rubric for identifying what makes space monastic in contrast to other domestic settlements.

This book is not intended to be a catalog of current and past archaeological sites, nor does it aim to be comprehensive in its examination of all the archaeological evidence of Egyptian monasticism that currently exists. Excellent and comprehensive volumes on the materials remains of Christian architecture, by Peter Grossmann, and of monastic settlements, by Ewa Wipszycka, already exist.³ In addition, *The Coptic Encyclopedia* (CE), edited by Aziz Atiya in 1991, is now available online as a digital resource updated and housed at Claremont.⁴ The CE covers both ancient and modern topics associated with Coptic culture, and it also provides extensive sources for lesser-known archaeological sites in Egypt.⁵ More regional treatments of sites or areas are appearing with greater frequency to offer close studies of frequently undocumented or understudied monastic sites.⁶ An illustration of the rapid growth in comparative treatments

of monastic archaeology is *La vie quotidienne des moines en Orient et en Occident (IVe–Xe siècle)* (2015).⁷ At the 11th Congress for the International Association for Coptic Studies (IACS) in Claremont, California, in 2016, Elisabeth R. O’Connell, assistant keeper for the Department of Ancient Egypt and Sudan at the British Museum, offered a stunning compendium of the amount of new work being undertaken since 2012 to demonstrate the importance of Late Antique archaeology and the role of monastic settlements in aiding our knowledge of this period.⁸

This book is therefore not seeking to replace these volumes, but rather to depart from a culture-based study of the archaeological evidence to a more theoretical reading of the archaeological evidence and textual sources. By using a selection of monastic sites I pose the question of how perceptions of the monastic landscape were shaped both in Late Antiquity and in the modern period. As I believe that the papyrological and documentary evidence is equally informative as the various strands of archaeological evidence, I do not privilege texts over archaeology, or vice versa. Instead, my goal is to seek the mutually informative nature of interweaving archaeological, documentary, and literary evidence together to reconstruct a tapestry of the monastic landscape. In the end, this volume offers a new narrative of monastic Egypt that situates physical, archaeological evidence as a corrective to the mythology of the Egyptian desert so frequently extracted from the redacted *Sayings of the Desert Fathers* or the writings of John Cassian and Palladius. In doing so, this work adds to the foundational work of James E. Goehring to move the critical eye toward the historical story found in the physical remains.⁹

In this book I consider the ways Late Antique monastic settlements and monastic values were physically grafted onto the natural environment such as natural caves, pharaonic quarries and tombs, and the edges of the cultivation to create a new Christian topography. In addition to the reuse of ready-made residences, monastic builders also constructed entirely new purpose-built structures.¹⁰ Current excavation projects at the White Monastery (Dayr Anba Shinudah) in Sohag,¹¹ in the hills of Naqlun behind the Monastery of Archangel Gabriel (Dayr al-Malak Ghubriyal) in the Fayyum, and the Monastery of John the Little (Dayr Yuḥannis al-Qaṣīr) in Wadi al-Natrun,¹² just to name a few, complement numerous site visits I have made over the years to study the placement and extent of monastic settlements. In order to understand the materiality of Egyptian monastic settlements, we must look more broadly at the planning and organization of monastic communities through the occupation of the land. I seek to revise earlier scholarship, which regarded the desert as a land not worth inhabiting and one to which monks fled in order to escape the world. My effort is not new, but rather part of a growing paradigm shift in how Egyptian monasticism is understood as scholars examine

literary accounts, documentary evidence, and new archaeological projects with an eye to seeing the variegated nature of the monastic movement.

Any cursory view of excavation reports on monastic sites will illustrate that a variety of terms are used without much qualification or explanation about why spaces were called an “oratory,” “cell,” or even “monastery.” It is safe to say that the terms do not necessarily reflect an agreed-on definition for monastic archaeological classification, but rather a general sense in which archaeologists convey meanings of how a particular space may relate to other monastic terms. Many of the terms have their origins in Greek (Eastern) and Latin (Western) monastic architecture, such as “oratory,” “hermitage,” “monastery,” “cell,” and “laura.” Each term evokes a particular characteristic, but not necessarily one that is the same between sites. For example, oratory is often used to describe a space where monastic prayer and associated religious activities took place. It is frequently equated with a room with painted inscriptions, or *dipinti*, and complex wall painting programs. However, the term is not commonly or frequently found in Coptic or Greek sources in Egypt to describe specifically monastic spaces for prayer, despite the fact that the word is linked directly to “a place for prayer.”¹³ One component of this book is to look at what monastic residents called their own spaces and to employ that language when talking about monastic space. As we will see, Late Antique monastics used a wide range of terms to discuss their built environments and, in particular, called their residences “dwelling places” (*ma nshōpe*), a term that rarely appears in excavation reports before now. In part, my discussion explores what happens to our own perception of monasticism when we adopt the language and expressions of Late Antique inhabitants in discussing the built environment. When I do discuss the excavation reports and history of a site, I will use the nomenclature that was used by the original excavators and then turn to the epigraphic evidence to trace what monastic residents called the same spaces.

Chapter 1 tells the story of how nineteenth- and early twentieth-century travelers, missionaries, and scholars encountered and assessed the value of archaeological remains of monasticism. Shaped by a variety of imperialist, colonial, and orientalist readings of Egypt’s contemporary and ancient Coptic Church, we see how foreign viewers of monastic landscape regarded mud brick architecture as built by ignorant monks lacking basic skills.¹⁴ Foreign viewers were participants in supporting a preferential treatment of Egypt’s ancient monuments over its Christian and Islamic past. Even four remarkable excavations of monastic remains at the beginning of the twentieth century could not transform entrenched perceptions of monasticism as a movement born of ignorance, fanaticism, poor building, and isolationism.

Chapter 2 continues the story of the advent of Byzantine archaeology in the twentieth century between 1914 and 1945, when several publications finally came to light after the end of World War II. I highlight how the work of three

excavations undertaken after 1945 offered substantial evidence to challenge the perception of Egyptian monasticism's development. Interwoven throughout this historical account of the development of the field, I demonstrate the struggle to see Coptic archaeology as a field apart from history or art history. The chapter then turns to the methodological and theoretical changes in the field of archaeology, such as processual archaeology and postprocessual archaeology, which were not adopted by those practicing either Coptic archaeology or monastic archaeology. Since "Coptic" identity ostensibly separated the material from the broader community of Byzantine archaeology, which was also undertheorized, it is not surprising that Coptic archaeology remained a culture-based field that often served the needs of art historians and of historians, but not the broader field of colleagues in Byzantine archaeology. I then propose a selection of contemporary archaeological theories that I use throughout the remaining chapters of the book to frame my reading of the landscape, community, materiality, ecohistory, and cultural geography.

Chapters 3–5 shift the discussion of Egypt's monastic landscape from the modern past to the ancient past. Within these three chapters I analyze Late Antique perceptions of the monastic landscape. The chapters consider an array of textual sources as they relate to the ecohistory of the monastic landscape, its built environments, and the monastic perception of how the two relate. Taken together, the three chapters highlight underutilized written sources for finding Late Antique voices about monastic constructions, communities, and the landscape. Chapter 3 is an ecohistory of the Egyptian landscape to provide a grounding for those unfamiliar with Egypt's topography but also for those who have not considered Egypt's physical landscape previously. Chapter 4 provides a close reading of a wide assortment of Late Antique letters, contracts, and building codes to demonstrate how the sixth to ninth centuries witnessed the transformation of Egypt's landscape. The sources reveal that perceptions of what makes a space a monastery, a cell, or a holy place were quite fluid and variable. With a foundation in the actual landscape of Late Antique Egypt, Chapter 5 takes readers to the best-known hagiographical sources from the *Life of St. Antony* to the *Sayings of the Desert Fathers* to the *Life of St. Shenoute*. Reading the hagiography within a wider context of the Late Antique landscape demonstrates how severely circumscribed monastic literature is in presenting a history of the monastic built environment. Additionally, by rereading the hagiographical sources, echoes of the diversity of language about monastic space, the built environment, and the landscape that were once overlooked or given little notice appear as far more pertinent than previously thought, thereby revising the perception of how we might read the hagiography and mythology of Egypt's monastic desert.

Finally, Chapters 6 and 7 focus on the archaeological remains of select monastic settlements to further refine perceptions of the monastic landscape.

Chapter 6 posits the critical questions related to how archaeologists identify a site as monastic. Recent archaeological work within Western Medieval monasticism and Eastern Byzantine monasticism demonstrates how monastic sites were frequently overlooked or misattributed.¹⁵ In order to establish an analytical framework, I compare the material from the Late Antique settlements at Karanis, Kom el-Dikka, Jeme, and Tebtunis with the monastic material from Bawit. Chapter 7 then introduces readers to the diversity and range of Egyptian monastic sites through seven case studies of monastic settlements. This overview concludes the shifting of perceptions of Late Antique monastic landscapes by demonstrating how little monastic stories tell us about the built environment and Byzantine Egypt. The sites, therefore, bring us full-circle to demonstrate how flawed modern perceptions were of monasticism as they were based more on literary sources than on the actual evidence of the monastic built environments.

The conclusion offers a contemporary guide to redefining the perception of Egyptian monastic communities as a far more diverse, integrated, and integral part of the Late Antique landscape than what the hagiographers described and modern scholars once believed. Throughout this book I raise the question of what it means to discuss Egyptian monasticism as a component of a broader community of Byzantine monasticism or to see it exclusively as an expression of Coptic identity. My hope is that seeing the question centered on the archaeology of monasticism in Late Antiquity will spurn discussion to refine how we approach the material remains from an exciting period in Egypt's history. Woven throughout the earlier chapters, I return to the theoretical strands that shape the analysis outlined in Chapter 2 for demonstrating the richness of the archaeological record for further analysis. Rather than seeing monastic sites as locations inhabited by those who dismissed the importance of the world and the land, I present Egypt's monastic communities as spaces constructed through careful planning, organization, and an acute awareness of the environment, the community's identity, and access to neighbors. The idea that monastics were fleeing the world and finding merely the most convenient spaces to inhabit does not account for the rich diversity of site planning and variation in locations evident in Egypt's archaeological record.

ONE

MONASTIC ARCHAEOLOGY IN THE NINETEENTH AND EARLY TWENTIETH CENTURIES

REV. DR. MICHAEL WOLF HAMMA, A LUTHERAN PASTOR, MADE HIS FIRST journey to the Holy Land in 1898. Well-read in the religious landscape of the biblical world, Hamma understood the desert as the abode of Elijah and John the Baptist. He recorded his travels in a journal that he carried with him with an eye toward future publication. Like many American ministers and other world travelers, Hamma knew there was a demand for religious travel literature in the late nineteenth century. He was impressed by the sacred landscapes as being the most fitting locations for spiritual acts. Although he considered the desertscapes to be stark and foreign, for they were “lonely and quite strange enough to the traveler,” he also considered them to be imbued with spiritual value (see Fig. 2).¹ For Hamma, the austerity provided the most spiritual serene location for divine encounters:

The deep dark ravine seemed so cut off from the world, so secluded and lonely that there is a perfect fitness in the place for the scenes which have transpired there. A sublime hiding place for the prophet of the Lord could not be found. And though it seems gloomy and uninteresting now, how grand it must have been to Elijah; for this was the Temple in which he daily communed with his God. To him it must have been as the gate of heaven, the gold paved avenue to the throne of Jehovah.²

Hamma contributed to a genre of religious travelogues that also served as devotional material making it possible for Christian readers to travel to the



2. Engraving of Wadi Shu'eib showing St. Catherine's Monastery in 1881.

exotic locations by reading. What made his work and that of others so effective was the ability to link geography to sacred events found in the Old and New Testaments. As we will see, the ability to appreciate foreign landscapes with signs of monastic communities was far more complicated than traveling through the landscape of the Holy Land where the Bible offered noble figures such as Elijah to emulate.

Reconstructing the monastic landscape in Late Antique Egypt requires us to begin in the nineteenth century with the history of how travelers, scholars, and Christian missionaries viewed the Egyptian landscape. The Judean deserts associated with Christian history were regarded as more holy and ephemeral than the deserts of Egypt that monks were thought to have inhabited.³ The nineteenth century was a watershed age in which a mysterious language, written in hieroglyphs, was deciphered for the first time and the sacred writings on Egyptian tombs were unlocked for viewers.⁴ Guidebooks began to present the ancients in a way that offered historical narratives not possible before, and the focus on Egypt's early history received pride of place over Christian, Muslim, and Jewish monuments and history. The desire to see pharaonic Egypt, coupled with a growing interest in the conversion of Muslims in Egypt, sparked numerous encounters with Coptic Egypt. Throughout the

nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Egyptian monasticism and its history were caught up in a complex dialogue about the role of the Coptic Church in contemporary Egypt.

This chapter first outlines the perceptions of missionaries, travelers, and early archaeologists as they encountered monastic remains during their travels. Their experiences created a discourse that devalued both the history and the archaeology of monasticism. The second part of the chapter presents the first four excavations in the early twentieth century at monastic sites and describes how those discoveries offered ample evidence to challenge negative perceptions of monastic culture in Byzantine Egypt.

EARLY PERCEPTIONS OF EGYPTIAN MONASTICISM

In 1853, a letter to the editor of the *Independent* and the *Weekly Review* contained the complaints of a traveler who looked upon Egyptian Christian remains on a recent trip up the Nile. In his letter, Joseph Thompson, an American Protestant from New York, expressed why he did not appreciate the antiquity of the ruins or the possible kinship he could have with other Christians from centuries ago. The visual culture of Byzantine Egypt stirred his emotions to such a point that he was compelled to rebuke the monks who built the dwellings he saw: “Christianity is made for active service in an active world; and while the life of the Christian, in its inmost springs and sources, is hid with Christ in God, and is fed by unceasing communion with its source, it is not a life hidden from the view of men in mountain cavities and monastic cells.”⁵ Thompson, like other Anglican-American travelers to Egypt, expected Christians to be *in* the world and not hidden *from* the world. They expressed dismay at many practices they observed and commented freely, voicing displeasure in seeing the buildings of monastic communities. Travelers like Thompson often sought an adventure in the desert to complement their Nile cruises, but they did not anticipate the clear evidence of Egypt’s Christian past.⁶ With their supplies gathered for a short trek into the wadis and guided by a staff of assistants or dragomen, European and American travelers could have a relatively safe encounter with Egypt’s wonders. Not knowing what to expect, they encountered evidence of Egypt’s past. In their journals, the travelers would remark on the heat of the sun, the lack of vegetation, and the seemingly endless landscape before them. In the midst of the perceived barrenness, their eyes would fall upon evidence that suggested others had found the landscape quite suitable for habitation. Viewers of ruins in the desert concluded that the only people who may actually do something as crazy as live in such locations would be monastics. The roots of such a view are found in the contemporary struggle

of visitors to Egypt who were apparently unsettled by their first encounters with the liturgical life of the Coptic Church.

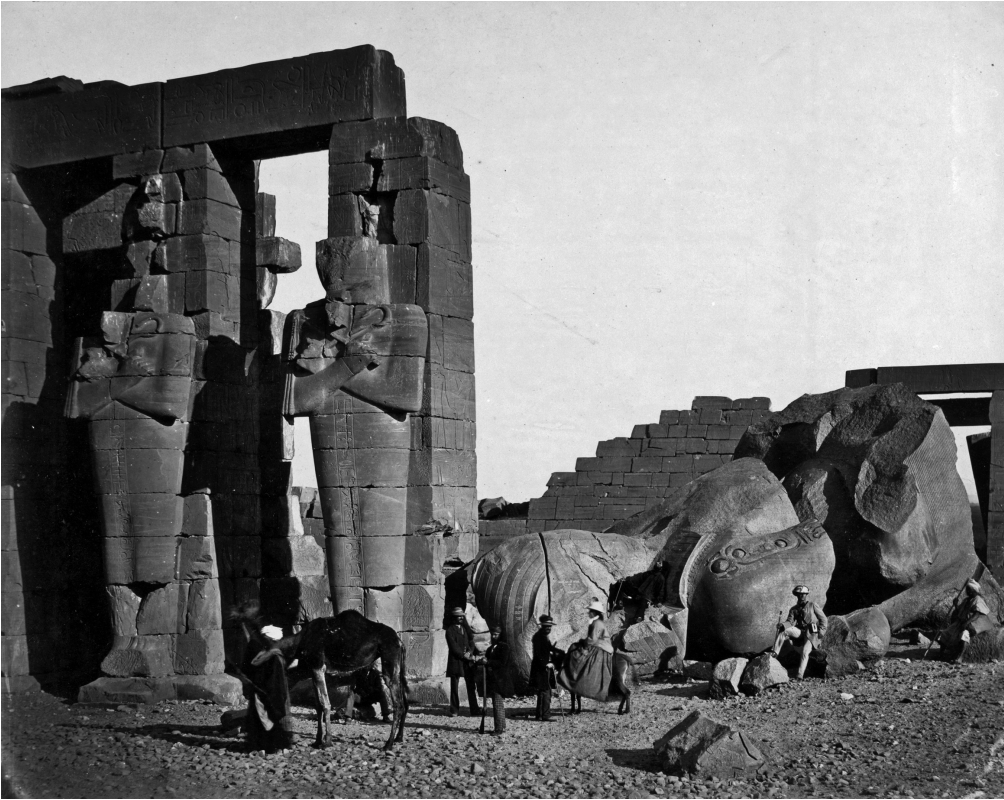
When New England Catholic missionary Eugene Vetromile wrote of his 1870 travels to Egypt, he began his preface by explaining the need to have a Catholic travelogue available, as many Catholics had to rely on Protestant travelers, who “frequently misrepresent” and “sneer at the practices” of Catholics and their history.⁷ In addition, he noted that Protestant distain extended naturally to Eastern Christians, who appeared as equally strange, if not more so, to Protestant travelers to Egypt. Protestants, writes Vetromile, “think little of monuments erected by the piety and zeal of Christians” and assume “a certain air of skepticism and intelligent contempt” for other Christian communities.⁸ Vetromile was able to see the inherent bias that Protestants had in viewing monasticism and a church tradition shaped by a rich liturgical history. In his only comment addressing the built environments of Coptic monks, Vetromile is more clinical and descriptive: “Among the tombs [of Thebes] one can see the traces of Christian anchorites and hermits, who made them their abode in the primitive times, and to this day many Arabs live in the tombs, and some consider themselves even happy to have secured an ancient tomb for their dwelling.”⁹ His observation is one that illustrates that the practice of adaptive reuse of abandoned tombs continued into the nineteenth century and that the use of such space was considered beneficial. When Vetromile visited Old Cairo, the center of several Egyptian churches, his moderate tone changed. Despite his recognition of a loose kinship with Eastern Christians, he could not accept the Egyptian Copts as contemporary brothers in Christ and instead worried about associating with “a schismatic and heretical church.”¹⁰ The confessional differences and traditions certainly shaped foreign perceptions of the value of Coptic history and monastic building practices as valued space in Egypt’s landscape.

Both Thompson and Vetromile typify the strong emotional response that some Christians had when they encountered Coptic Orthodox practices and culture. As they traveled to Egypt for long- and short-term mission projects, they saw themselves as exemplars of the active Christian life. Reports by American missionaries in Egypt, sponsored by the Presbyterian Church, and by British Anglican missionaries, sponsored by the Church Missionary Society (CMS), generated a significant body of written material for consumption by active missionaries and by their supporters back at home.¹¹ Their books included photographs showcasing the culture and people of Egypt and maps expressing their theological concerns. Protestant and Anglican missionaries, like many other visitors to Egypt, expressed outright dislike for the Coptic Church and its associated monastic communities.¹² The monasteries did not, in their minds, protect cherished tradition or history, but rather allowed the Coptic Church to languish in ignorance. Andrew Watson, in *The American Mission in*

Egypt, wrote in 1898: “The Coptic convents were formerly very numerous, numbering 336 according to their tradition. At present their number is comparatively small, and the monks have lapsed into secular habits. None of them care for learning, and few of them are noted for piety. They are generally ignorant, dull, stupid and addicted to the free use of alcoholic drinks, which they manufacture from the date.”¹³ Some of the blame for ignorance lay with the perception that Coptic, as a liturgical language akin to Latin, limited the ability of Egyptian Christians to embrace the true faith. Rena Hogg, a Presbyterian, explained how the Coptic Church found itself in such a state: “[H]ow the Coptic Church, with so fair a history, had sunk so low, the answer is not far to seek, and carries its own warning to us all. Her people had lost their Bible. It had been entombed for them in a language once their own, long since forgotten. Only now through the efforts of strangers in the nineteenth century was it being given back to them in Arabic, their adopted tongue.”¹⁴ The belief that Coptic was a language not understood even by the monks and priests of the Church further solidified ideas that the Egyptians were in need of greater missionary efforts.

With the production of Arabic New Testaments, particularly as a result of the efforts of Eli Smith and Cornelius van Dych, Anglo-American missionaries diligently worked to place scriptures into the hands of Coptic Christians and thereby replace the antiquated language of Coptic.¹⁵ The real barrier to modernizing the Coptic Church was the monastic institutions. Charles Watson, son of American Presbyterian missionaries in Egypt and later founder of the American University in Cairo, pointed to the monastery as the source of Christianity’s diminished value: “The Egyptian monastery, on the contrary, has ever been a center of ignorance. Material and debased conceptions of God prevailed, marked by great bigotry and ignorance.”¹⁶ The perception that the modern monastic community was shaped by ignorance and poor Christian teaching further solidified the belief that Coptic monasticism was an antiquated and dangerous element in Egyptian society. It was not difficult, therefore, to believe that the first monks were similar, if not worse, in their misguided beliefs and lifestyle. The building efforts by monks, therefore, could only be, according to this reasoning, equally inferior to the constructions of the ancient Egyptians.

Christian mission workers participated in touristic viewing of archaeological remains along with many Americans and Europeans who visited Egypt as part of the Grand Tour (see Fig. 3).¹⁷ They had their photographs taken and drank tea under the shadows of the great columns. It was relatively easy within such traveling groups to transfer the pejorative view of contemporary Christian monasticism to the remnants of the first monastic communities whose archaeological features still appeared in and around the ancient monuments.¹⁸ The Christians, like their pharaonic predecessors in the Ptolemaic and



3. Egypt, Sinai, and Jerusalem: A series of twenty photographic views, with descriptions by Mrs. Poole and Reginald Stuart Poole: Fallen Statue at the Ramesseum, Thebes, 1857.

Francis Frith (British, 1822–1898), William Mackenzie Albumen print from wet collodion negative; image: 38.30 × 48.20 cm (15 1/16 × 18 15/16 inches); matted: 60.96 × 76.20 cm (24 × 30 inches). The Cleveland Museum of Art, Andrew R. and Martha Holden Jennings Fund 1992.236. © The Cleveland Museum of Art

the Greco-Roman periods, reused older structures out of practical necessity and convenience.¹⁹ The emotional responses to monastic settlements could be quite heartfelt. In 1838, Miss Platt and Rev. Henry Tattam traveled from Britain to Egypt explicitly for the acquisition of Christian manuscripts.²⁰ While they traveled with others from Alexandria to Cairo and then sailed the Nile, their objective was very clear. The discovery that many Coptic monasteries held libraries with medieval manuscripts sparked a race for collecting items for private and public institutions.²¹ While Tattam negotiated with the monks for manuscripts, Platt wrote her responses in a journal she would later publish on her return to England. Platt expresses her fear and pity for the Coptic monks whom she saw in Upper Egypt and their “miserable huts of mud unburnt brick.”²² She shuddered when the doors to the White Monastery at Sohag closed behind her, for she felt as if she became closed to the world and all its knowledge. The monks were “banished from the world” as if they were not allowed to be in society. The fact that the monks willingly chose

to closet themselves away, resulted, in Platt's eyes, in a life filled with "trifling occupations of their nearly useless days, and living almost in ignorance of the doctrines of the Holy Religion."²³ While the monastic libraries held many Christian treasures that foreign collectors desperately wanted, Platt describes the monks as "blinded by superstition, even with the World of Life in their hands."²⁴ In the end, Platt could consider the monks at the White Monastery only as "objects of pity," for they lived so poorly.²⁵ Platt's comments foreshadow a great effort by Protestant missionaries to evangelize the Coptic Church in the mid-nineteenth century. The interest in Egypt as a potential missionary field was great, and both Presbyterians and Anglicans were relatively successful in writing and selling books on Egypt to evoke support from their communities at home.

The works of missionaries complemented the accounts written by other travelers seeking to share their experiences of world travel. For example, Joseph Moyle Sherer, a British officer who traveled frequently to India in the early nineteenth century, wrote of his experiences in Egypt also in 1838. However, Sherer believed he was creating a journey to exotic places through the written word. As did most travelers to Egypt, Sherer visited the most popular tourist destinations in Egypt, including the pyramids of Giza; the city of Luxor, which is home to Karnak and Luxor temples; and the mortuary tombs and temples of Thebes on the west bank.²⁶ Sherer wanted readers to experience the vivid and exotic landscape of Egypt through his evocative descriptions. Here he presents the pharaonic ruins in Luxor as he takes his readers to the Temple of Karnak:

But away, reader, away! Come with me; step over that fallen capital; put your foot on that fragment of a cornice; clamber over those masses of enormous stones; now stoop, and enter this obscure and darker part of the ruin. The roof here has never fallen in; and here are two rows of pillars, with faded colours on them, – the columns are, but the colours evidently not, the ancient Egyptian; you may distinctly trace the outline, on two of them, of such heads as are still to be seen in the rude paintings in Coptic churches; on one, too, you may see an inscription in red paint, of a like colour; it records the names and meeting of some humble, persecuted Coptic bishops, who once held their unostentatious council here, in a secluded spot, which served as a shelter and retreat for the worship and service of the true God, and the instruction of their flocks. Yes, in the solitude of these ruins, a weak small sect, who, having little strength, yet kept His word, have read the gospel of Christ, have bowed and wept before the throne of grace, and have sung the song of Moses to the ancient accompaniment of the loud cymbal!²⁷

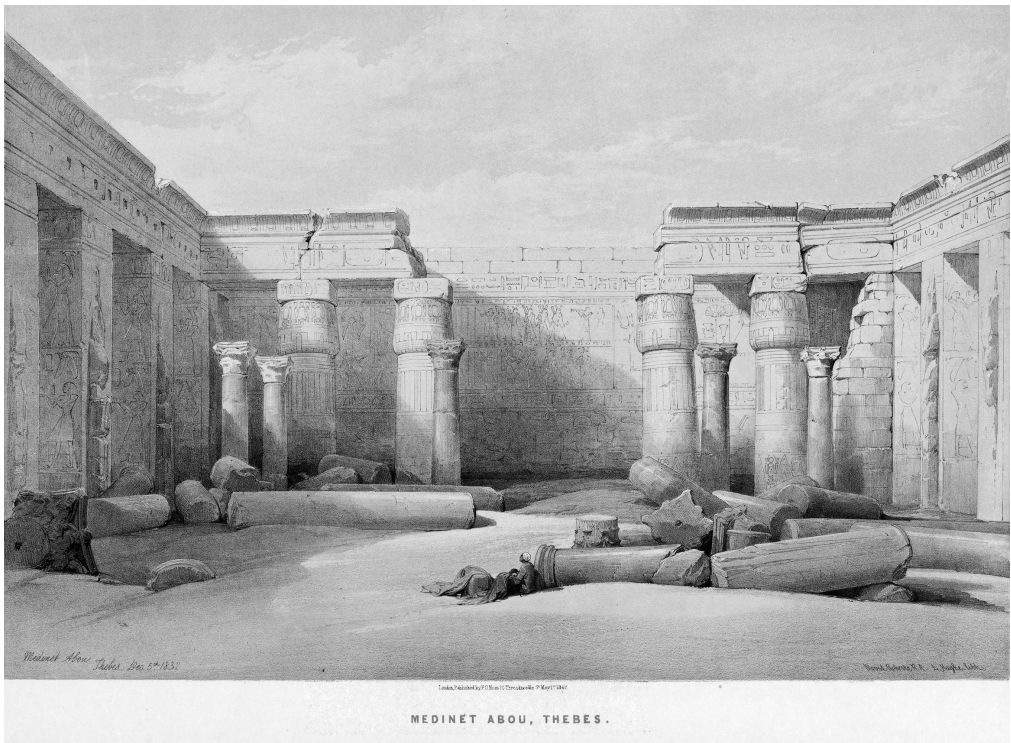
In recreating the cluttered landscape at Karnak, Sherer invites his readers to physically step over the ruins as they weave a path into the Festival Hall of Thutmosis III, where he is looking at Christian paintings that overlay earlier Eighteenth Dynasty painted columns (see Fig. 4). Sherer exhibited imperialist



4. Column in Festival Hall of Tuthmosis III at Karnak Temple showing a vertical column of hieroglyphs with the black outlines of two halos for monastic saints painted directly over the pharaonic bands for the nave of a small church. Luxor, Egypt.

compassion for the Christians he describes as “weak,” “small,” and with “little strength.” He was, unlike many writers, a bit more sympathetic to the presence of Christian archaeological remains in the midst of the pharaonic ruins. As he viewed the ghostly nimbus of a saint, his imagination aided his reconstruction of a group in need of protection. Much like Platt showed pity for the monks, Sherer drew an image of a timid Christian community threatened and seeking refuge in the ruins.

For nineteenth-century European and American travelers to Egypt, the presence of so many Christian archaeological remains was a surprise. They visited Egypt for its antiquity and the evidence of its once-great civilization. But they also confronted material of Egypt’s Christian and monastic past that was considered inferior and derivative. The desire to purify and clean pharaonic sites of this material is evident when we compare early etchings and photographs of pharaonic sites with photographs of the second half of the nineteenth century. An 1847 etching of the second court of the mortuary temple of Ramesses III at Medinet Habu shows five Late Antique columns still standing



5. *Egypt and Nubia*, Volume II: *Medinet Abou, Thebes*, 1847.

Louis Haghe (British, 1806–1885), F.G. Moon, 20 Threadneedle Street, London, after David Roberts (British, 1796–1864). Color lithograph; sheet: 43.80 × 60.20 cm (17 3/16 × 23 11/16 inches); image: 32.90 × 49.10 cm (12 15/16 × 19 5/16 inches). The Cleveland Museum of Art, bequest of John Bonebrake 2012.173. © The Cleveland Art Museum.

in place as part of the church that once filled the interior of the court (see Fig. 5). Several other columns rest on the accumulated desert sand that has filled the court. As excavators began to clear the sand from Medinet Habu, and other pharaonic sites throughout Egypt, the remains of the Late Antique use and habitation were removed and only occasionally documented in the process (see Fig. 6). The rationale for stripping the sites might be found in the fairly clear dismissal of Coptic art as worth saving. Art historian E. Baldwin Smith described the downward spiral of art after the advent of monasticism in his 1918 *Early Christian Iconography*. He writes: “Under this non-artistic tradition all classical beauty of form was abandoned and all pride in execution was lost.”²⁸ He continues to describe Coptic art as “a mere backwater in the history of artistic development” and as “coarse, crude, and sketchy in technique.”²⁹ Smith was not unique in this opinion. His pejorative view of Coptic material remains would find support in the early decades of Egyptology.

One explanation for the indifference to monastic remains was the unapologetic preference for pharaonic remains over those of Egypt’s Christian past. Both travelers and scholars, particularly Egyptologists, found the presence of



6. Interior second court of the Mortuary Temple of Ramesses III at Medinet Habu in Thebes in 2008. All of the columns of the church had been removed, which were still present in 1847.

Coptic or Christian material culture an unwelcome interloper in their search for ancient Egypt. Amelia Edwards, who founded the Egypt Exploration Fund (EEF) in 1882 and was a well-known travel writer, presented a survey of the Egyptian landscape in *A Thousand Miles up the Nile* (1877).³⁰ During a ten-month excursion to Egypt, the popular author wrote a diary of her journey along the Nile and painted watercolors of the major sites.³¹ Like the authors of many works on Egypt for the lay reader, Edwards focused on ancient Egypt and offered only passing reference to the existence or observation of Coptic remains during her travels. Ruined “convents” appear only as incidental remarks as she described the journey by boat, and the only Coptic site to receive attention was a story of the famous site of Jabal al-Tayr.³² The monastery was known to numerous Nile travelers and made an appearance in several letters and travelogues. The monks from the monastery dove into the Nile from a high cliff to approach the Nile boats, asking for money from the onlookers. The monastery was known, therefore, not for its Coptic heritage or material remains, but rather for the notorious diving skills of the monks who resided atop the cliff.³³ The dangerous acts of the monks further underscored their desperation and ignorance.

Edwards’s travelogue inspired others to pen more scholarly introductions to the monuments. Two authors who represent the writings of antiquities authorities were E. A. Wallis Budge, the Keeper of Egyptian and Assyrian Antiquities for the British Museum, and Arthur Weigall, a self-taught field archaeologist

working as the Inspector-General for the Department of Antiquities.³⁴ Budge's *Nile Traveller* became a primer for English-speaking visitors who wanted to explore ancient Egyptian history. Published by Thomas Cook, *Nile Traveller* ensured the success of Budge's account for patrons of any of Cook's Nile cruises in the late nineteenth century.³⁵ Weigall, however, aimed his account at those seeking a more archaeological approach to the history than offered by Budge. He writes that the archaeologist "has no particular wish to convey his information to a wide circle," whereas the historian "having a story to tell, requires an audience to tell it to."³⁶ The historian "is pleased to arouse that public inquisitiveness which the archaeologist regards as something as an interruption."³⁷ Weigall's guides were purely descriptive in their approach to the monuments, saving judgment or assessment for other authors. As Egyptologists became textual tour guides to ancient Egypt, they steered clear of commenting directly on Coptic monuments. They left their frank assessment of the intersection of Christian and pharaonic history for their monographs rather than their guidebooks. For example, Carl Lepsius, a Prussian Egyptologist working in Egypt during the mid-nineteenth century, explains his actions in destroying the remains of Coptic history as necessary for restoring the "splendid sculptures of the Egyptian gods and kings" that were hidden by the "totally uninteresting Coptic paintings."³⁸ He recognized that he was participating in the establishment of a new landscape of readable monuments. All that he and others needed to do was to clear out the distracting and uninteresting remains of the Christian period in order to present a more pleasing monument for tourism.

Sir William Flinders Petrie, the father of modern Egyptology and the first chair of Egyptology at University College London, dedicated his life to the documentation and exploration of numerous sites throughout Egypt. With his wife, Hilda, he sought to document the presence of standing architecture at numerous sites and to assess the possibility of extensive pharaonic remains.³⁹ Known for his somewhat eclectic and thrifty manner in the field, Petrie often had a revolving collection of assistants whom he appointed to draw plans of sites when he was occupied with more interesting material. For example, he sent his assistant Mr. Ward to draw a plan of the standing architecture at the White Monastery in Sohag in 1908 and came later to check the plan, but he did not, himself, study the material, as he was occupied with the pharaonic material south at Athribis and the tombs in the nearby cliffs.⁴⁰ As Paul Sedra explains, Petrie's fervent work with Egyptian material fostered a deep belief for the "[e]xplicit, elaborate parallels between the 'progress' of the ancient Egyptian empire and civilization and that of the modern British empire."⁴¹ The Copts produced art that was "base" and "painfully seen" in how they "decayed classical" forms into Christian forms.⁴² Despite his wife's excavation and document of a Coptic monastic residence at Abydos, Petrie had little interest in Coptic material culture.

A few scholars, working as surveyors, mapped the presence of quarries, military outposts, and temporary settlements in the nearby deserts. Hans Winkler, a British surveyor working for the Egypt Exploration Fund in the early twentieth century, was “deeply impressed by visiting these Coptic monasteries in the desert near the towns.”⁴³ He presents an early environmental history of Egypt through a discussion of the placement of monuments within the land. In Egypt’s earliest history, he tells us, “Egyptians had displayed the most refined civilization.”⁴⁴ Winkler sees the pharaonic age as the apex of Egyptian architectural and cultural achievement – much as Petrie did. Then, the tide turned as “the sons of these gay contented Egyptians succumbed under the wave of the new ideal of asceticism” and “this ideal pushed the happy Egyptians out of their towns and villages, out of their green fields into the severe barren desert, to mortify their flesh.”⁴⁵ Winkler’s binary landscape is visually and emotionally framed as a rhetorical presentation of Egypt’s landscape. The ancient landscape was happy, green, refined, and urban. The ascetic landscape, in contrast, was severe, mortifying, barren, and colorless. For, “in the time of Egypt’s grandeur every man wanted to leave lasting traces of his existence in the visible beautiful world of the Nile valley.”⁴⁶ Winkler explains how the beauty of the world was harmed, not by Adam and Eve’s sin, but by Coptic monks, who “distrusted the beauty of the world, they no longer wanted to show that they had lived on the earth, they wanted to get rid of their simplest manifestation, their bodies.”⁴⁷ Winkler continues to narrate the account of Egypt’s decline with the coming of Christianity. The hermits were the ones who eschewed grandeur and left little trace of their place on Earth. Winkler’s words evoke the classic narrative of Edward Gibbon in his *The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* (1776–1789). Gibbon was unapologetic in his distaste for Christian monasticism, for monks “corrupted the evidence of history; and superstition gradually extinguished the hostile light of philosophy and science.”⁴⁸ For later nineteenth- and early twentieth-century scholars of ancient Egypt, the distain for monasticism was just as present as it was for Gibbon. Monasticism represented a world at odds with the culture, history, and science of the ancient Egyptians. The aesthetics of the beautiful landscape were therefore well established – the beautiful landscape was one of majestic stone structures. It had to be purified of all rubble and mud brick of the dark ages of the Coptic period.

Egyptologists were not alone in rejecting the religious landscape of monastic Egypt. Religious intellectuals, such as Union Seminary professor Philip Schaff, who founded the American Society of Church History, considered Eastern Christianity a form of modern-day paganism.⁴⁹ In Egypt, the phenomenon was most apparent, as he claimed the Coptic Church still maintained ancient Egyptian religious practices and engendered a form of Christianized

paganism. He described Coptic Christianity as “petrified” and filled with “empty ceremonies” that clearly illustrated how “the Church of Christ was mummified and buried in the tombs.”⁵⁰ Schaff’s discussion of Christianity in Egypt is particularly instructive for the framing of the religious landscape and the complexity of outsider views of Egyptian Christian history and monuments. Schaff conveys the traditional reading of monastic landscape as inactive and barren. The choice of location was damning. Monks were the antithesis of the ancient philosophers who lived in Alexandria, the epitome of the ideal urban environment.

The rhetoric of the spiritual corruption of the city and purity of the desert landscape was lifted directly from readings of the Desert Fathers of Egypt and Jerome’s biography of Paul the Simple.⁵¹ Embedded in Schaff’s narrative is the Gibbonian revulsion for monasticism. Schaff concisely sets the imagined scene for his readers of his travel guide, *Through Bible Lands*, by evoking a similar contrast Winkler would use just as easily sixty years later: “In Egypt also arose the system of Christian anchoretism and monasticism, which reflected in the moral sphere the startling contrast between the solemn, barren desert and the smiling garden of the Nile.”⁵² As a scholar of religion and Biblical history, Schaff had little interest in monasticism, which he viewed as a “mania for the voluntary martyrdom of ascetic life” and an “abnormal method of Christian holiness.”⁵³ In Schaff’s view of history, it seemed completely natural to portray a once-happy and smiling Egyptian population transformed into one dominated by the misery of the Christian desert. This perception would remain firmly entrenched until the 1970s, when new archaeological work would further destabilize the overly negative assessment of the monastic landscape.

Nineteenth- and early twentieth-century writers, particularly those who identified with Protestant expressions of Anglo-American Christianity, could not understand the attraction to monasticism. Schaff is passionate when he writes of the veil of ignorance that lay over Egypt and in particular the Copts, who were willing to tolerate monasticism. He explains, “Anchoretism and monasticism were at best but abnormal and morbid forms of Christian life, and grew out of the heathen forms of asceticism.”⁵⁴ Such an expression articulates the otherness of monasticism for Anglo-Americans who considered this form of religious devotion simply an “exchanged” and “refined idolatry.”⁵⁵ The continuity of the practice into the present further solidified orientalist views that monks were upholding ancient pagan rituals by “idoliz[ing] dead men, and buil[d]ing shrines for their bodies” just as the Egyptians had done centuries before for crocodiles and bulls.⁵⁶

In rare cases, a few Christian viewers looked upon the Coptic remains with a kind of pietistic longing. They sought a time in which Christianity was a

valiant hero in the world of paganism. For some, the discovery of Christian settlements was a sight of pure joy, for the ruins seemed unremarkable until one realized they were the former homes of ancient Christians. Sherer's experience was one of the first to express this appreciation when he describes a kinship with monastic architecture: "[P]oor and humble do they look in the midst of such ruins as these; but to the Christian eye they are arrayed with glory. Here men confessing Christ, the Saviour of the world, have knelt in prayer."⁵⁷ With such language, Sherer wanted his readers to literally imagine a chorus of Christians dominating the older pagan spaces of ancient Egypt.⁵⁸ But such willingness to repopulate ancient spaces with Christian inhabitants was rare. With overt paternalistic language, most travelers and writers pitied the Coptic Church and its monuments that lay in ruin. The desire to investigate and preserve the Christian past was limited by a stronger impulse to reform and modernize the Coptic Church. This dominant concern greatly limited the scope of monastic archaeology in Egypt. The first two major archaeological discoveries of Egyptian monasteries were purely accidental and it took several years for even their materials to become known outside of Egypt.

RECOGNIZING THE VALUE OF COPTIC REMAINS

The history of archaeological work in monastic Egypt – and more broadly Byzantine Egypt – remains hidden, much like Coptic history, from the broader story of Christianity. In contrast to Egyptology, Classical archaeology, or even Medieval archaeology in the West, Byzantine archaeology is only just beginning to emerge as a field independent from its ties to other fields. In part this late development is linked to the dependence on art historical and architectural studies of Byzantium that were not based on archaeological work. Michael Decker's assessment of the field of Byzantine archaeology is a frank story of a field beholden to Classical archaeology and a lack of recognition as a defined area of study.⁵⁹ Decker points to "its poor reputation," the "cultural bias of western academics," and the lack of a "Byzantine archaeological pioneer" as major factors limiting the field's development.⁶⁰ The absence of a leading Byzantine archaeologist to establish the field, like Petrie did for Egyptology, is directly connected to the themes outlined earlier in which Byzantium and Christian Egypt were deemed as distortions of the great civilizations of the past. For Decker, the cause of disinterest stems from the historic roots of archaeology, where

[t]here was no room at the table of the chauvinist scholars for a decadent civilization: Byzantium was medieval and Christian. In the eyes of the humanist scholars, the hybridity of Byzantium repulsed; it was too familiar to exoticize and too "Oriental" to deem "western." It did not help matters that most of the former territory of the empire lay under the

control of one of the oldest and most odious political rivals to European cultural hegemony: the despised Ottoman Turks.⁶¹

The occupation of Egypt in 1882 by the British created greater access to Egypt's monumental civilization while simultaneously ensuring that archaeologists dismissed the study of its Christian and Muslim past.

The desire to collect archaeological material from Egypt's pharaonic past overwhelmed any nascent interest in artifacts from Egypt's later Byzantine or Islamic settlements. The one area that did attract interest in Christian remains, at least, was the recovery of manuscripts. The discovery of Christian manuscripts in still active Coptic monasteries attracted the curiosity of several European Christian scholars, collectors, and antiquarians. Fueled by the academic study of the textual transmission of the Bible and the popularity of the Historical Critical Method, the collection of Christian manuscripts in monastic libraries offered some of the first clues to the production of the New Testament and its evolution in the late Roman and early Byzantine world. Robert Curzon (1810–1873) and Henry Tattam (1788–1868) aggressively acquired manuscripts for the British Museum in the early nineteenth century. Since many medieval Coptic, Ethiopic, and Syrian texts were copies of earlier Greek and Coptic manuscripts, the acquisition of manuscripts became an essential priority for those interested in documenting the history of writing and the transmission of the Bible. By the early twentieth century, many Egyptian monastic libraries saw their collections dispersed into foreign museums and libraries.⁶²

Coupled with the passion for manuscripts, the late nineteenth century gave birth to the hunt for papyri and textiles. Both items were easily transportable and offered satisfying results for both excavators and their patrons, but very little stratigraphic or documentary archaeology was involved with the recovery of the materials. From 1896 to 1907, the discovery of an enormous cache of papyri in the middens at Oxyrhynchus (modern al-Bahnasa) by Bernard P. Grenfell and Arthur S. Hunt, working for the Egypt Exploration Fund, fostered the hunt for early Christian texts.⁶³ The first excavations produced a page from the gospels of Thomas and Matthew, respectively. The discovery proved that Egypt held treasures that would spawn the field of papyrology in addition to Egyptology. David Gange asserts that Egyptology in particular was a “hand-maiden of theology for several decades” far beyond that of any other field of study in the nineteenth century.⁶⁴ Instead of seeking evidence to question the reliability of the Bible, Egyptological reports and excavations were used to further affirm theological beliefs. Caught between these various forces for knowledge and success in Egypt, archaeologists continued to perform their duties as excavators and collectors for a variety of individuals and museums. Excavations provided immediate access to manuscripts that did not require interaction

with monastic gatekeepers of long-protected manuscripts. The knowledge that middens, such as those at Oxyrhynchus, were often depositories for discarded correspondence, literary texts, and religious treatises encouraged archaeologists to embrace large-scale clearings of sites to acquire as much material as swiftly as possible.⁶⁵

The first scholars to dedicate substantial time to documenting Egypt's Christian material remains were not archeologists by training. Alfred J. Butler (1850–1936) was a historian of Roman Egypt and traveled to Egypt in 1880 to work as a tutor for the children of Khedive Tawfiq.⁶⁶ Once in Cairo and Alexandria, he found himself fascinated by the Coptic churches of Egypt and later published *The Ancient Churches of Egypt* (1884) as the first comprehensive documentation and study of Christian architecture in English. His work helped draw broader attention to the historical value of Egypt's still standing Christian monuments and he also recorded oral traditions he learned about the churches during the late nineteenth century. He began his publication with an explanation of the serious lack of attention to Christian Egypt:

The aim of this book is to make a systematic beginning upon a great subject – the Christian antiquities of Egypt. Few subjects of equal importance have been so singularly neglected ... No doubt the attention of mere travellers has been bewitched and fascinated by the colossal remains of pagan times, by the temples and pyramids which still glow in eternal sunshine, while the Christian churches lie buried in the gloom of fortress walls, or encircled and masked by almost impassable deserts ... The Copts were among the first to welcome the tidings of the gospel, to make a rule of life and worship, and to erect religious buildings: they had upheld the cross unwaveringly through ages of desperate persecution: and their ritual now is less changed than that of any other community in Christendom ... for the history of Christian Egypt is still unwritten, or at least that part of it about which the most romantic interest gathers, the period which witnessed the passing away of the ancient cults and the change of the pagan world. We have yet to learn how the cold worship, the tranquil life, and the mummified customs of that immoral people dissolved in the fervor of the new faith; how faces like those sculptured on the monuments of the Pharaohs became the faces of anchorites, saints, and martyrs.⁶⁷

Butler's preface offers an apologetic plea to entice readers away from the bewitching monuments of the pharaonic age to see the historic value of Coptic Egyptian monuments, which, he states, are “neglected” subjects. He offers a logical appeal to his presumably Christian readers to highlight how quickly Egyptians responded to the Christian gospel and their suffering under Diocletian and later the Islamic caliphs. In creating a need for the “still unwritten” history of Christian Egypt, he relies on two binaries involving change

over time. First, he employs the traditional narrative of contrasting the happy and bright pharaonic landscape “still [a] glow in eternal sunshine” with the “gloom” and “impassable deserts” that bury the Christian churches. Here, Butler engages with the traditional narrative that monastic habitations were dark, lonely, and unhappy places owing to their spatial locations, in contrast with the settlements of the past. His second binary offers the contrast between the “immoral” pagan past of “mummified customs” with the “fervor of the new faith” as monasticism and Christian saints became the new faces of Egypt. In the end, Butler’s preface reveals how well he knew that his volume was filling a void in the scholarship, even though he was a historian and not an architect or archaeologist.

Almost ten years after Butler published his two-volume introduction to church architecture, the British church architect Somers Clarke (1841–1926), who was the architect at Holy Trinity Church, Ardington, traveled to Egypt. There he contributed his technical skills for masonry and architectural planning with excavation work at Hierakonpolis and al-Kab, beginning in 1893.⁶⁸ He was a vocal opponent of hasty preservation and restoration methods he observed of historic monuments, of all periods, in Egypt. He would eventually retire to Egypt after 1902 and dedicate part of his time to research for his *Christian Antiquities in the Nile Valley* (1912). Owing to his role as an honorary member of the *Comité de Conservation des Monuments de l’Art Arabe*, Clarke participated in the documentation of existing monuments and offered his expertise in how to approach restoration in a manner that considered the contemporary use of the structure along with preserving its historical integrity. He recognized in 1912 the lack of any authoritative work on the monuments of Christian Egypt even twenty-eight years after Butler’s publication, which he was updating in many ways. Clarke begins his historical sketch with a recognition that the poor state of the remains and their position “between ancient Egyptian and Saracenic monuments” has created a void in knowledge:

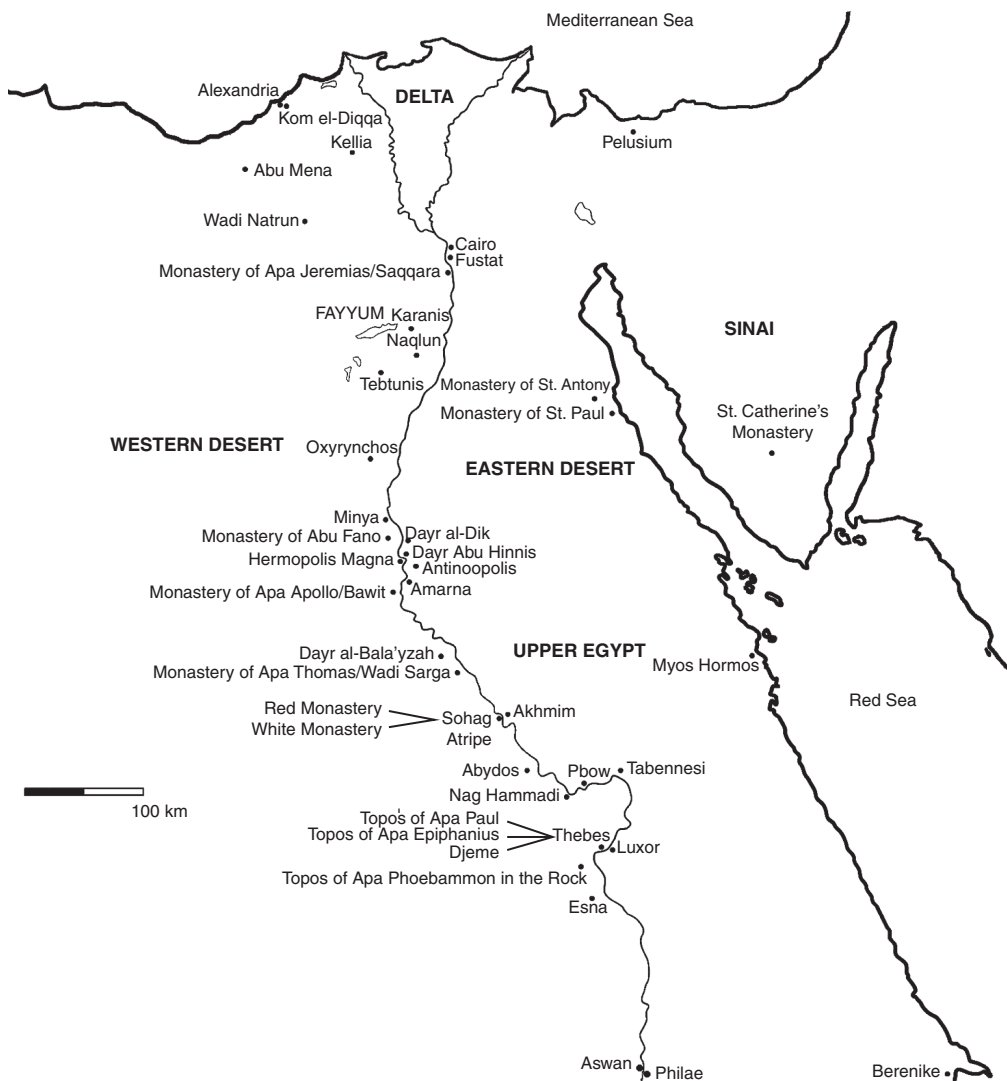
The buildings which grew up under Christian influence have as yet been but little studied, and it must be admitted that as we see them to-day, decrepit, neglected, and ruined, they are not very attractive ... Those elements which we know as Byzantine dominated over anything native. Where we find carved decorative stonework, or where we find painting, there is nothing in these to indicate that we are looking on things Egyptian. Probably the Greek city of Alexandria had a potent influence.⁶⁹

Despite Clarke’s deep interest in mud brick architecture and his desire to document the Christian remains, his training as an architect led him to view anything that was made of stone or showed signs of refinement to come from outside of Egypt. This prejudicial view of what was truly Byzantine Egypt

shaped the first two major archaeological discoveries in Egypt in 1900 at Bawit and in 1906 at Saqqara.

THE ADVENT OF BYZANTINE ARCHAEOLOGY IN EGYPT IN THE EARLY TWENTIETH CENTURY

Between 1900 and 1915, four excavations brought to light substantial archaeological evidence for monastic settlements that could have transformed perceptions of monastic history and archaeology in the early twentieth century. Yet, the story of each site's discovery, the publication of the material, and the method of excavation would limit the effective reach of these discoveries and delay, in some ways, the advent of the field of Byzantine archaeology. In Middle Egypt, Bawit was the site of the first large-scale excavation of a monastic settlement led by Jean Clédat for IFAO (see Fig. 7). Excavations began in 1901 at the later-identified Monastery of Apa Apollo, and he recovered impressive wall paintings, carved sculptures, and extensive monastic architecture, which immediately established a visual corpus of Egyptian Byzantine art. In the same year, Egyptologist William Flinders Petrie visited the White Monastery in Sohag, but he found little of interest and delayed mapping the extant remains until his return to Athribis in 1908. Further north at Saqqara, James Quibell was working for the EEF when he was informed about the discovery of some unusual paintings just south of the Step Pyramid. His excavations at the Monastery of Apa Jeremias from 1906 to 1910 provided the first continuous, large-scale clearing of a monastic settlement and offered unprecedented information for considering the design of monastic sites. Along with artifacts from the Monastery of Apa Apollo at Bawit, the most spectacular finds from the Monastery of Apa Jeremias contributed to a core of galleries for early Coptic art at the Coptic Museum in Cairo, which was founded in 1908 by Murqus Simaika.⁷⁰ Both Bawit and Saqqara produced enough artifacts that several pieces went to the Louvre and to other national museums.⁷¹ With the movement of new Byzantine finds from Bawit and Saqqara into the hands of collectors, dealers, and museums, both the British Museum and the Metropolitan Museum of Art (MMA) of New York established plans for acquiring more artifacts of their own through excavation. In 1912, Herbert E. Winlock assumed responsibility for the documentation and excavation of a small monastic settlement erected in an abandoned pharaonic tomb in Thebes on behalf of the Metropolitan Museum. In the following year, the Byzantine Research and Publication Fund (BRF), with the support of British Museum Byzantinist O. M. Dalton, sent Assyriologist R. Campbell Thompson to Egypt to begin excavations at a mud brick settlement built around a series of abandoned quarries in Middle Egypt. By 1915, three volumes were published about Bawit, three volumes about Saqqara, but only brief articles about the monastic



7. Map of Egypt illustrating locations of monastic and nonmonastic settlements discussed in the text.

remains from Wadi Sarga and Thebes. The outbreak of World War I delayed publication of the Theban material for the Monastery of Epiphanius until 1926, and the excavation material from Wadi Sarga was never published except for a short survey included in a volume on the Coptic texts, which was published in 1922. The fragmentary nature of the information and its dissemination continued to limit and define how Byzantine and monastic archaeology was viewed as a departure from accepted archaeological work. A brief survey of the discoveries at the four sites illustrates the accidental nature of many encounters with monastic remains and the patchy origins of the field of Byzantine archaeology in Egypt in the early twentieth century.



8. View of the south side of Bawit in 1901.

Excavations at Bawit

In 1900, Jean Clédat, working on behalf of the French Institute of Archaeology in Cairo (IFAO), visited Bawit to examine artifacts discovered through local digging by nearby residents for *sebakh*, a rich fertilizer composed of mud brick and decaying organic material.⁷² The remains of long-abandoned ancient and medieval towns and villages provided a ready supply of *sebakh*, which was in high demand by local farmers throughout Egypt.⁷³ After his arrival, Clédat observed the location of the *sebakhin* activities and viewed some of the recovered objects.⁷⁴ Recognizing the high quality of the Byzantine carved stone and wood objects he viewed, Clédat immediately embarked on persuading the director of IFAO to support an excavation season with soundings at the site to understand better exactly where the objects came from (see Fig. 8).⁷⁵ With the assistance of Émile Chassinat and Charles Palanque,⁷⁶ and the full support of the French Institute, Clédat carried out four campaigns between 1901 and 1905.⁷⁷ These campaigns uncovered more than fifty buildings and two churches. During the first season Clédat was convinced he was excavating a monastic necropolis and not a monastic settlement.

The next three IFAO campaigns took place during the winters of 1903 and 1904, followed by an unpublished campaign in 1905.⁷⁸ Clédat published preliminary discussions in the inaugural volumes of the new *Bulletin* for the French Institute and progress updates in the *Comptes rendus des séances de l'Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres*. In the case of Palanque's work in 1903, his report in *BIFAO* was the only report produced of his work in which he found forty buildings at Bawit.⁷⁹ After a short hiatus, large-scale excavations resumed in 1913 under the direction of Jean Maspero, who identified forty more monastic structures.⁸⁰ Together the excavators fully cleared and recorded the interiors of at least seventy structures across a forty-hectare area.⁸¹ Maspero excavated several buildings (Halls 1–39) in the northwest end of the mound and cleared six buildings in the south (Halls 40–45) that he believed contained evidence of a monastic settlement for women, separate from the community in the north. Based on the number of figural representations of monastic women and inscriptions invoking the prayers of a monastic mother, Maspero concluded that the Monastery of Apollo had two homosocial communities and could no longer be regarded as a cemetery, as originally posited by Clédat.⁸² Unfortunately, the young Maspero died in 1915 fighting on the Western Front. He left behind three notebooks with his observations from the work and copies of inscriptions from the buildings he cleared in 1913. This material became the basis for Etienne Drioton's later publication of Maspero's work for *Mémoire de l'Institut français d'archéologie orientale (MIFAO)* in 1931.⁸³ After Maspero's season, the site was left dormant until the Egyptian Antiquities Service resumed excavations in the second half of the twentieth century.

The first substantial publication of the first two seasons appeared in 1904 in *MIFAO* and provided eight pages of introduction to the site followed by a partial catalog of twenty-eight buildings with a description of the architecture.⁸⁴ The maps in *MIFAO* volumes were incomplete even with the mapping of the two major churches. Clédat included transcriptions of inscriptions and dipinti to complement his discussions of the painted programs found within the various rooms. When warranted, Clédat listed artifacts discovered within a room; however, for the most part, these references were predicated on the importance of Coptic writing on the ceramic fragments. Visual documentation included a schematic map, black-and-white photographs of the excavation and wall paintings, and some watercolor reproductions of select wall paintings. The *MIFAO* publications did not include any substantial discussion of pottery, strata, deposits, or ostraca recovered during the excavation. The monograph represented the type of excavation report typically expected from early twentieth-century archaeologists. Like monographs detailing pharaonic tombs and temples, several pages of the volume contained beautiful watercolor illustrations of wall paintings to document the pigments used, but no discussion was given to periodization of deposits or location of small finds.

The early-twentieth century excavation methods were consistent with those employed at numerous sites throughout the Middle East. Similarly, the publications of the work included a few reports in archaeological journals, which offered longer narratives of the work undertaken, and supplemented by the formal monographs with extensive photographs and transcriptions of inscriptions and dipinti. The monographs published between 1904 and 1943 were comprehensive but did not really engage in discussions of relative dating. Dominique B  nazeth and Marie-H  l  ne Rutschowskaya published a volume in 1999 of Cl  dat's unpublished notes, photographs, and ostraca from his excavations, thereby greatly expanding our knowledge of the early excavations.⁸⁵

Excavations at Saqqara

In 1902, perhaps inspired by the discoveries at Bawit, Gaston Maspero, then director-general for the *Service des Antiquit  s* and father of Jean Maspero, was the first to suggest that a settlement in the area south of the pyramid of Unas at Saqqara was in fact a monastic community. He suggested the settlement's name was linked to Apa Jeremias on the basis of his own cursory explorations near the pyramid of Unas.⁸⁶ Until that point, the mud brick structures, whose walls were still visible, were thought to be the remains of a Roman village, which helped explain the presence of some late Roman burials at Saqqara.⁸⁷ The formal excavation of the Monastery of Apa Jeremias began with an accidental discovery in 1906, recorded by James E. Quibell, a British Egyptologist not trained in Byzantine material culture, who was working on behalf of the EEF to document the pharaonic remains south of the Step Pyramid.⁸⁸ In his first report on the monastic settlement he explains how local farmers were the first to discover the remains of the monastery in an area that was given over to Egyptians for extraction of fertilizer. Due to Saqqara's unquestioned importance for Egyptian history, director-general Maspero granted a few mounds as "safe" areas for the collection of *sebakh*. By granting the concession to the farmers in one area Maspero hoped to redirect the farmers away from more ancient areas that were now considered off limits. A single guard was positioned to supervise the collection of *sebakh* and to alert antiquities officials when anything of interest appeared through unsystematic excavations. Quibell, after being informed by a guard of the discovery of walls with colorful paintings, recounts: "It is a curious circumstance that, though this site has been given over to the *sebakhin* for twenty years, there seems not to be any record of painted walls being found before. We may therefore hope that the monastery has not been much touched and that the area destroyed by the *sebakhin* was covered only by the village which adjoined the main building."⁸⁹ He proceeded in the next year to begin proper excavation by clearing five "chapels or cells," which were "small and rudely built."⁹⁰



9. View of the Main Church of the Monastery of Apa Jeremias at Saqqara looking east toward the Nile with a footpath visible across the inundated fields connecting the site to the village to the east.

The monastic remains piqued Quibell's interest and in the following seasons from 1907 to 1910 he cleared and mapped the purpose-built monastery, making it the second most important discovery in the history of monastic archaeology in Egypt (see Fig. 9). Quibell was aware of the discoveries at Bawit and the potential treasure trove he might have at Saqqara. He began excavating at a part of Saqqara known as Ras al-Jisr, or "Overseer of the Embankment." Photographs taken by Quibell, and later by Gertrude Bell in 1909 when she visited the site during excavations, show the level of the inundation and the Nile's close proximity to the cultivation on the site's east side.⁹¹ Such photographs help reacquaint modern viewers with the fluctuating nature of the landscape and how monastic settlements, such as the Monastery of Apa Jeremias, were built in environmentally stable locations and were not threatened by the rise and fall of the Nile.

By the time Quibell had concluded his work in 1910, his team recorded more than 200 residential rooms, three churches, a refectory, a hospital, and several storage facilities. Three of the four volumes published by Quibell on his work at Saqqara included documentation of the monastery's excavation. The first announcement of the work was given just a few pages in volume II.

Volume III, covering the season 1907–1908, was dedicated to the Monastery of Apa Jeremias. During this season, Quibell cleared sixty-eight rooms, including the large central church, the refectory, and a hospital, but did not offer descriptions for twenty-two of the rooms, despite the fact that he recorded inscriptions and graffiti from those rooms. The missing rooms appear on the plan of the site, but Quibell does not offer any account of how they related to the overall site or their individual features. The volume included descriptions of the excavation and more than 400 Coptic texts including epigraphic sources (inscriptions cut in limestone slabs and *dipinti* painted in black and red) and documentary evidence (ostraca).

For the final publication on the monastery, Quibell put forward a dating sequence for the site. He based his chronology first on literary and historical sources, such as John of Nikiou, and then modified the physical evidence to fit his historical framework with the assistance of numismatic evidence.⁹² His reconstruction of the site placed the founding of the community before the end of the fifth century, drawing on John of Nikiou's account of Anastasius's visit to Jeremias before he became emperor (r. 491–518).⁹³ Quibell located the demise of the site to the middle of the ninth century when most of the dated funerary and nonfunerary inscriptions disappear.⁹⁴ The discovery of a tenth-century Arabic graffito on a pillar of the church by a Muslim convinced Quibell that the settlement was in ruins by that date.⁹⁵

Despite three-and-a-half centuries of the occupation of the settlement, Quibell had a low view of its “poor remains.” He writes:

There was at least one destruction and rebuilding of the main church; two of the three other churches were built, in part, with material derived from earlier ones; then doorways and passages were blocked, walls were doubled in thickness, a boundary wall was added. In the later days it is plain that the monks felt the need of defense and that the paths through the monastery were made as tortuous and forbidding as might be.⁹⁶

The inferior quality of the architecture significantly biased Quibell and how he understood the history of the site. Without any physical evidence of conflagration, either natural or human, or signs of natural disasters, such as an earthquake in 520 CE,⁹⁷ Quibell envisioned a somewhat tumultuous history for the site, which explained the poor quality of construction, which he dated to the first half of the sixth century.⁹⁸ The main church and “most of the larger rooms and the rows of cells” were built during a period of prosperity for the community.⁹⁹ The next phase for Quibell is in the second half of the seventh century, after the Arab conquest in 641 CE. This is the period when the persecutions began, according to Quibell, because “the sculptures representing living creatures had to be excised or hidden; then the monastery must have been sacked and the churches thoroughly destroyed.”¹⁰⁰ The evidence for this lively

portrait of desecration is based solely on Quibell's conjecture of the rebuilding and redesign of the main church.¹⁰¹ Quibell did recognize the hand of various painters and styles, but offered only a rather crude assessment of paintings as "barbarous" and others more carefully executed. Quibell regarded 850 CE as the end of the monastery, when "the community was dwindling away; some of the buildings were deserted and had drifted up with sand; when the cattle were brought home at night they were tethered above the ruined cells."¹⁰²

The central church was a major focus of Quibell's work as it was fitted with deeply carved limestone panels and capitals. Its position relative to the rooms on the north, west, and south sides suggests that the architects had laid a plan. Quibell recovered a foundation block with a quarry-mark reading "the church," which proves the stonecutters prepared stone for particular features of the site.¹⁰³ Quibell offers a tantalizing description of an architect's representation of roofing on a stone flake showing "a rude sketch of two arches."¹⁰⁴ He interpreted this graffito as illustrating the roofing method used in the main church. An unusual discovery in the clearing of the church was a deposit of tesserae more commonly found outside of Egypt, although some mosaic floors appear in Alexandria.¹⁰⁵ Quibell observes that the location of the deposit was not against the wall, but rather on the floor, thus leading him to conclude that the mosaic had fallen from a semi-dome and not from the adjacent walls.¹⁰⁶

Excavations at Thebes

Yanni Athanasi, who first explored the hills of Thebes in 1820 for promising excavation sites on behalf of his employer Henry Salt,¹⁰⁷ first noticed the site's Christian elements when he recognized a Greek dipinto in the vestibule of the tomb as a copy of a letter from Athanasius.¹⁰⁸ The site was later called the "Convent of St. Athanasius" because of the presence of the painted text and thus distinguished the Coptic settlement from others in the Theban area.¹⁰⁹ Carl Lepsius, working in Thebes from 1844 to 1845, explored the tomb and made the first drawing of a stone sarcophagus of Daga, a Middle Kingdom official.¹¹⁰ The site escaped further notice for about forty years until the first cursory plans of the settlement were made in 1883 when Gaston Maspero removed the Coptic remains that obstructed access to the Middle Kingdom tomb so that he might relocate the sarcophagus of Daga to the Bulak Museum in Cairo.¹¹¹ Urbain Bouriant published the first description of the monastic remains, when Maspero removed some of the mud brick additions in order to have greater access to the entrance of the tomb to remove the sarcophagus.¹¹² In his report, Bouriant published ten inscriptions, including one inscribed on a stone slab, that were part of the vestibule built in front of the tomb entrance.¹¹³ He mentions the recovery of several ostraca that were later relocated to the Coptic Museum.¹¹⁴ His plan of the vestibule provides the locations for the

ten inscriptions he copied before the physical structures were dismantled, and later archaeologists rely on Bouraint's drawing in reconstructing the now-lost sections of the entrance into Daga's tomb.¹¹⁵ Lord Carnarvon directed the next exploration of the site in 1907–1908, but only half-heartedly, and he abandoned the work after recovery of some Coptic ceramic wares and Middle Kingdom sculpture.¹¹⁶ The tomb was then sealed with a gate in 1910 and protected from any further unauthorized digging within the tomb, but the Coptic remains outside of the tomb, which were substantial, were left unprotected.¹¹⁷

The first systematic excavation of the site was directed by Norman de G. Davies in the winter of 1911–1912 on behalf of the EEF. His objective was to gain a better understanding of the physical nature of Daga's tomb, which he did not believe was a gallery tomb, contra Lepsius and Maspero, and to document the interior structure of the tomb, its wall paintings, and its inscriptions. Although Davies was working for the MMA's Egyptian Expedition at the time, he offered his services to the EEF, but "[t]he undertaking proved to be a larger one than it had promised to be at first."¹¹⁸ Davies states in his introductory remarks that he needed to cease work:

It was impossible for me to extend my inquiries further. Fortunately Mr. H. E. Winlock took up the matter for the Metropolitan Museum of New York, and in a few weeks his trained workmen cleared the whole site, laying bare both this interesting tomb and the Coptic monastery which had been erected in its court, and bringing to light many valuable documents of both these widely severed periods (see Fig. 10).¹¹⁹

Davies was able to turn the entire enterprise over to his colleague Herbert Winlock. Gaston Maspero, who was now director-general, approved of the MMA's expedition, taking sole responsibility for the excavation.

Under Winlock's directorship, the MMA excavated for three months in 1912 and for four months in 1914.¹²⁰ During the first season, Winlock collected several "manuscripts which are an important contribution to our knowledge of conditions of monastic life in Egypt before the Arab conquest" and "numerous letters and documents written on papyri and potsherds."¹²¹ The excavation of the built environments included modifications within the tomb of Daga and on the terrace, immediately in front. Hugh G. Evelyn-White, an archaeologist employed by the MMA with a keen interest in Late Roman and Coptic archaeology, joined Winlock for the 1914 season.¹²² Walter E. Crum worked for the project as the Coptologist, further expanding his experience with excavated textual evidence from both Wadi Sarga and Thebes. The objective of the MMA's two seasons was the complete excavation of the settlement. Publication of the excavation was delayed, as was that of the work at Wadi Sarga, by World War I, when many of the participants in the MMA project enlisted in the war effort.¹²³ The two-volume documentation of the



10. View south toward Shaykh 'Abd al-Qurnah with the Tomb of Daga and the monastic settlement known as the Monastery of Epiphanius in the center.

excavation and the edited Coptic and Greek texts was published later in 1924. The comprehensive narrative of the history of the site, the analysis of the objects and architecture, and the publication of the documentary material elevated the small site's importance simply because the presentation of the excavation was far superior to the reports of the earlier Bawit and Saqqara excavations.

Excavations at Wadi Sarga

Just a year after Winlock began working at the Monastery of Epiphanius in Thebes, a small excavation began further north in Middle Egypt at the site of Wadi Sarga. The story of how R. Campbell Thompson, an Assyriologist, came to excavate a monastic settlement in Egypt reflects the uneven nature of how many monastic sites were studied in the early twentieth century and how the British Museum sought to acquire Byzantine objects. The Byzantine Research and Publication Fund (BRF) was created in 1908 with the support of British Museum Byzantinist O. M. Dalton, an assistant keeper for the Department of British and Medieval Antiquities and Ethnography.¹²⁴ In 1911 Dalton published his influential volume, *Byzantine Art and Archaeology*, a comprehensive, art historical tome intended to highlight the artistic and architectural achievements

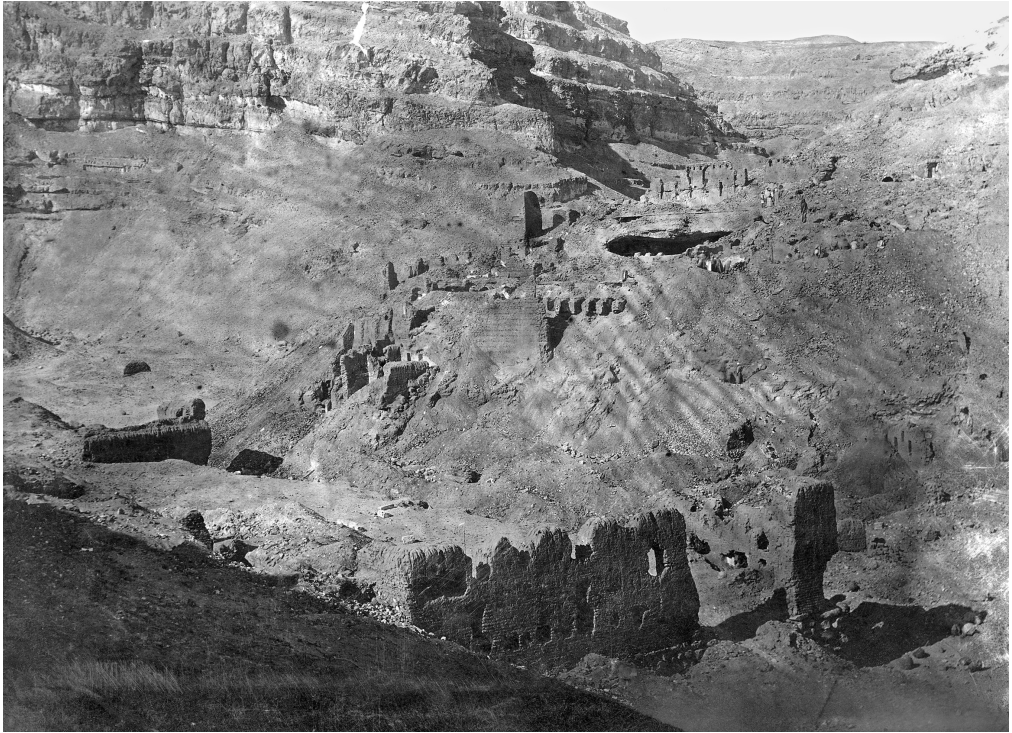
of the Byzantine world. His presentation of the Byzantine world was a reflection of the times and was limited by a particular focus on “Byzantium’s greatest achievement as lying in its mosaics, architecture, painting, and minor arts.”¹²⁵ His attitude toward the inferior nature of Byzantine Egyptian material is clearly expressed when he states:

With the growth of monasticism, and the tendency to an austere view of life, an art more realistic and didactic, more congenial to the Egyptian temperament than that of the Greek decadence, began to replace the art of Alexandria ... [The Copts] failed rather in the higher representative art, where mere tradition was of less avail. Though their influence was widely felt in many ways through Western Europe, they remained a race apart, and the true Coptic art was always contentedly provincial.¹²⁶

The focus on the provincial nature of Coptic art and material in general was a prejudicial view that has haunted the reception of Coptic material, especially items found outside of Alexandria. Despite this view of the lower nature of the Egyptian material, Dalton and his colleagues at the BRF desired to excavate in Egypt to acquire Byzantine objects for the British Museum.

Dalton’s first choice for a Byzantine period site was Bawit, since work at the Monastery of Apa Apollo had ceased after 1905. He referenced the two large Egyptian monastic excavations at Bawit and Saqqara several times in his 1911 publication. He also recognized the potential for Bawit, in particular, to increase the museum’s collection in Byzantine sculpture and painting.¹²⁷ The BRF’s request to work at Bawit was rejected by director-general Gaston Maspero in December 1912, likely because his son would begin work there in 1913.¹²⁸ Maspero’s rejection spurred Dalton to turn to British Egyptologists, who were already working in Egypt, to offer him potential locations for excavation, since they had likely encountered Byzantine material at a variety of sites. Because he was neither a field archaeologist nor a traveler with any experience in Egypt, he enlisted an experienced archaeologist, R. Campbell Thompson, to begin work at Wadi Sarga in the fall of 1913 (see Fig. 11).¹²⁹ Without any training in Coptic material remains, except for his work with Budge at the British Museum, Campbell Thompson set out to find a cemetery so that he might provide the BRF with worthwhile Byzantine artifacts for display.

The first publication of material related to Wadi Sarga was a 1903 report on the paintings found within a rock-cut church, but nothing further was provided about the settlement as a place for monastic habitation.¹³⁰ As with many sites in Egypt, the first to comment on the Coptic architecture in the region was Egyptologist William Flinders Petrie during his work on the pharaonic material at Rifeh in the winter of 1906/1907.¹³¹ His observations about the Coptic material were frequently of secondary concern in his excavation narratives compared to the importance of documenting pharaonic material. In his introduction to the region where the Monastery of Apa Thomas was built,



11. View of the Monastery of Apa Thomas at Wadi Sarga during excavation with two-story mud brick walls visible.

AES Ar. 1260. Courtesy of the Trustees of the British Museum.

Petrie makes a point to present a history of the Christian settlements in the region; he does not necessarily differentiate between Christian and monastic settlements. He writes: “All along the western desert are innumerable Coptic settlements on the cliffs. These are all of one type; in each case a quarry-cave of Roman age.”¹³² Petrie begins his settlement history by stating the structures were first temporary shelters as refuges “for the Egyptians at the Arab invasion” in the seventh century.¹³³ Then, the Christians decided to modify the quarry-caves into houses for long-term habitation. After the Copts and Muslims established some form of “peace” (Petrie does not specify what date he equates with the peace), the Christians “extended out over the foot-hill in front of the quarry cave.”¹³⁴ Finally, “at any time during the past eight centuries,” these buildings and communities were abandoned and the Christians moved from their Late Antique and medieval homes on the desert’s edge to the edge of the cultivation.¹³⁵ Their relocation left the brick and rock-cut dwellings to remain as the Christians “[left] their old refuges with little or no regard.”¹³⁶ Petrie’s reconstruction of Coptic settlement history is a necessary foundation for our examination of Wadi Sarga and the Monastery of Apa Thomas as it reflects a common narrative thread developed by archaeologists when viewing mud

brick settlements from the Byzantine period. Petrie's linear development of Christian site formation processes charts the modification of the quarries over five centuries and codifies a linear narrative of "flight" as the main motivation for building on the slopes of the wadis in Middle Egypt. Petrie did not differentiate between settlements he saw on the edge of the cultivation or provide an artifactual basis for the site's chronology.¹³⁷

The later discovery and excavation of the monastic settlement at Wadi Sarga is an intriguing story, impressively reconstructed by Elisabeth R. O'Connell in her work with the archival records from the British Museum of the 1913–1914 expedition of R. Campbell Thompson for the Byzantine Research Fund.¹³⁸ Documentary evidence, artifacts, and excavation documentation, including plans, photographs, and watercolor paintings, were all donated to the British Museum in March 1914, after the excavation concluded.¹³⁹ A final publication of the project was not produced as World War I overshadowed plans for work and the main excavator, Campbell Thompson, resumed his career as an archaeologist in the Near East. Until the British Museum's recent undertaking to publish the Late Antique material, very little was available about the site except for two brief publications by Campbell Thompson in 1914 and later in 1922, when he wrote a five-page account of the work for the publication of the texts excavated at the site.¹⁴⁰ Campbell Thompson did not have any excavation experience of Byzantine sites in Egypt, and therefore he left the discussion of the site's importance to Coptologist Walter E. Crum, who was one of the editors for the 1922 publication of the ostraca and papyri.¹⁴¹

CONCLUSION

The early twentieth century witnessed the first discoveries of extensive monastic material remains from the sites of Bawit, Saqqara, Thebes, and Wadi Sarga. These discoveries provided an overwhelming amount of data about the diversity of monasticism that ran counter to the narrative of ignorant hermits living in desert caves so frequently evident in historiographical presentations of Egyptian monasticism until these excavations. However, the impact of Wadi Sarga was severely limited to only the documentary evidence, which was published in 1922. The Bawit volumes lacked a comprehensive map and site plan. The richness of the numerous painted wall programs and dipinti received a privileged place over the small finds, rooms with little decoration, or the extensive textual evidence, which would be published almost 100 years later. Saqqara, in contrast, did produce a comprehensive site plan to introduce readers to the spatial planning of a monastic settlement, but it too, like Bawit, was known more for its painted programs, carved limestone capitals, and the monumental church than for the complexity of the site and what it could tell us about monastic life in Late Antiquity. The one site that offered a pioneering

vision to pull together a wide array of evidence was the work in Thebes at the Monastery of Epiphanius. Here, the combination of an archaeologist interested in Late Antique material and a Coptic linguist offered the ideal conditions to see a syncretical treatment of monasticism within a broader framework. Despite the site's relatively small scale in comparison to the remains at Bawit, Saqqara, and Wadi Sarga, the Monastery of Epiphanius emerged as one of the significant examples of Egyptian monasticism. It served to illustrate the lives of two or three monks living to support themselves through textile production, writing, and offering spiritual guidance. Its prominence throughout the twentieth century in scholarship had much more to do with the comprehensiveness of the publication than necessarily the monastic community's importance in the Theban area.

Nineteenth- and early twentieth-century encounters with the monastic built environment were shaped in part by an anti-Coptic Orthodox bias. In linking the historic roots of monasticism with the modern forms of Coptic monasticism, a range of authors reinforced a myth of Egyptian desert monasticism through their exposure to the contemporary Coptic community and their low opinion of mud brick remains marring the beauty of the ancient pharaonic monuments. Even with the four discoveries of the early twentieth century, only a few collectors became enamored with Coptic material. J. Pierpont Morgan, for example, traveled to Egypt often even before his presidency at the MMA (1903–1913). He went with his family on several Grand Tours, developed a pietistic appreciation for the landscape of the Holy Land, and expanded his interest in medieval art to include Coptic material.¹⁴² Several sculpted pieces of architectural fragments and funerary stela were purchased from the Monastery of Apa Apollo in Bawit as well as from the Monastery of Apa Jeremias at Saqqara for the MMA collection. Morgan even visited Quibell's excavation in 1909 and had a photograph taken sitting atop the raised seat in the open court at the site (see Fig. 12). The excavated remains also drew the attention of archaeology enthusiast and diplomat Gertrude Bell, who visited the site on January 29, 1909, and took photographs of it. In a letter to her mother she describes her trip to the site:

It's the monastery of St Jeremias, well known from literary sources, and was almost certainly founded not later than 480, so it is an early and a very fine example of Coptic work of the best period. Between the great church and the refectory there is an open court with a marble pulpit against the N. wall and the name of a preacher inscribed on it ... They must have stood in rows there under the sun to hear him, the poor monks, and probably he didn't try to condense the doctrine he dealt out to them. But it wasn't much better when twice a day they went into the refectory to eat for the order was terribly strict and the meals of the highest[?] description. Moreover they all had to stand, each in his appointed



12. J. Pierpont Morgan sitting on the raised seat of Apa Jeremias found at the Monastery of Apa Jeremias at Saqqara in 1909.

ARC 1425. Album of photographs of J. Pierpont Morgan's 1909 trip through Egypt and Greece, 1909. Morgan on the throne. Courtesy of the Pierpont Morgan Library, New York. ARC 1425. Purchased in 2003.

place looking to the East, and on the stone floor are worn the marks of their naked feet and an inscription to say which brother stood in that place. They had oysters and wine! The oyster shells and bits of the wine bottles are there.¹⁴³

In her description of the site, she highlights the devotion under severe circumstances of the hot sun, listening to long sermons, standing barefoot on the limestone pavers, and eating a “terribly strict” diet. Despite the presence of the extensive remains, Bell, like others, still maintained a perception of monasticism that held rigidly to older interpretations.

The fact that most archaeological reports, like those published by Quibell and Clédat, were designed to present a visual record of material found in the form of watercolors, line drawings, and black-and-white photographs naturally diminished the value of broad analytical reports. It was simply not how the field of archaeology functioned at the time. Few of the reports were written with scholars in other disciplines in mind; the reports, therefore, were mined for a variety of purposes to create new histories by those not necessarily well trained in archaeology. Unless one showed the type of curiosity and interest exhibited by J. Pierpont Morgan or Gertrude Bell, few individuals had the opportunity to revise their perception of the Egyptian monastic landscape. In Chapter 2 we will observe how changes within the field of archaeology and additional discoveries of archaeological sites in the mid- and late twentieth century offered substantial evidence to dislodge older views of Egyptian monasticism.

TWO

ARCHAEOLOGY AND TWENTIETH-CENTURY PERCEPTIONS OF THE MONASTIC LANDSCAPE

ARCHAEOLOGICAL WORK IN EGYPT IN THE EARLY AND MID-TWENTIETH century was focused primarily on the excavation of pharaonic sites. While Americans, for example, in the 1930s developed a fascination with Byzantium, especially as represented in the archaeological remains in Athens and Corinth, there was a more reserved appreciation for Byzantine Egypt.¹ With the exception of a few key projects looking at Roman, Byzantine, and Islamic material, such as the city of Karanis in the Fayyum from 1924 to 1935, the pilgrimage site at Abu Mina from 1905 to 1907, and the urban settlement of Fustat in Cairo from 1912 to 1924, archaeologists directed their energies toward documenting pharaonic Egypt.² As a form of “colonial archaeology,” as defined by Elliott Colla, the projects reflected the continuity of earlier nineteenth-century agendas centered on who owned Egypt’s antiquities and who had the right to display them.³ According to Colla, primarily British and French archaeologists and collectors were considered more able to salvage and protect the archaeological treasures of Egypt than Egyptians, who were cast as ignorant of their past and its value.⁴ The rise of politically active Egyptian intellectuals seeking to free Egypt from British guardianship and the monarchy began to see the benefits of archaeological material for crafting nationalist agendas.⁵ They borrowed language from contemporary, colonial enlightenment thinkers, stating that uneducated Egyptians “were indifferent to antiquities and thus lacking in culture,” whereas educated, “modern Egyptians have a more legitimate claim to Egyptian antiquities than do Europeans.”⁶ Egyptian intellectuals, such as

Ali Bahgat, who directed excavations at Fustat in 1912, and Murqus Simaika, who founded the Coptic Museum in 1908, found ways to articulate a need for cultural management that cast “Egyptian peasants” as “the chief threat to ancient monuments.”⁷ The “Egyptianization of archaeology,” as described by Donald Reid, created ideal conditions for the establishment of a new community dedicated to Coptic archaeology, but its impact for monastic archaeology would, unfortunately, be limited.⁸ Rising Egyptian nationalism helped shape the desire to have and present Egypt’s material remains after World War I, but monastic material did not readily offer accessible narratives to help Egyptian elites craft counter-narratives for the swirling debates about who owned Egypt’s past and how Egypt should evolve in the future.⁹ The political complexities of the twentieth century would have an adverse effect on the study of Byzantine Egypt until the unusual discovery of the Nag Hammadi codices in 1945, which drew attention back to the importance of Coptic manuscripts, but not to Byzantine archaeology.¹⁰

The first monastic discoveries at Bawit, Saqqara, and Thebes in the long nineteenth century (1789–1914) failed to revise notions of Egyptian monastic communities; instead, the discoveries offered complications, as the sites were utterly incongruous with notions of Egyptian monasticism. Three monastic sites excavated after 1948 were not accidental discoveries, but rather projects designed specifically for learning more about Egyptian monasticism. The excavated material was not substantively theorized, but it did offer more evidence for the great diversity in materials used by monastic communities. Part of the reason for the continued focus on archaeology as a handmaiden to history was the lack of more sophisticated analysis in Byzantine archaeology more generally. As Averil Cameron observed in *Byzantine Matters*, “Byzantium is an undertheorized field as well as an understudied one.”¹¹ The same could be said of Byzantine Egypt for most of the twentieth century until the 1990s.

This chapter narrates the complex history of monastic archaeology in Egypt between 1948 and the late 1980s and offers suggestions as to why the field of Byzantine archaeology did not change perceptions of the monastic landscape. The story of monastic archaeology in Egypt, therefore, offers an opportunity to trace how a field emerged from a culture-based archaeology to a twentieth-century field, with numerous monastic projects illustrating a surge in interest in monasticism, building techniques, and Late Antique archaeology.¹² The advent of positivist, processual archaeology, or new archaeology, in the 1960s and the later postprocessual archaeology of the 1980s, which focused on the individual, human agency, and the role of bias in archaeology, seems to have passed by Byzantine archaeologists working in Egypt and, in particular, monastic archaeology, almost entirely.¹³ To conclude this chapter I offer a selection of contemporary archaeological theories that I use as threads to weave throughout the

book to illustrate what may be gained by rereading monastic archaeology and landscape, to reconstruct the monastic community in Late Antique Egypt.

PUBLISHING MONASTIC ARCHAEOLOGY, 1914–1945

Rather than excavating in the field during wartime, several archaeologists used the period between 1914 and 1945 to publish the work from a few monastic sites not previously published due to the outbreak of World War I. Only James Quibell, working at Saqqara, was able to complete his work in 1910 and have the final volume of the Monastery of Apa Jeremias published in 1912, thereby making the monastery's materials more accessible before the disruption of world events. Assyriologist R. Campbell Thompson finished his excavations at Wadi Sarga in the winter of 1914 and never returned to Egypt again. Aside from a brief archaeological introduction to the site in the 1922 publication of the Coptic and Greek texts from the site, the material from the 1913/1914 excavation remained unpublished and unstudied until now.¹⁴ In the same year, Herbert Winlock concluded his excavations at the Monastery of Epiphanius in Shaykh 'Abd al-Qurnah at Thebes. The two-volume publication for the Metropolitan Museum of Art (MMA) of New York was delayed until 1926. Finally, Jean Maspero, who had assumed the directorship of excavations at Bawit in 1913, with a promising career in Byzantine archaeology, died on the Western Front in 1915. The publication of his 1913 season was delayed until 1931 and 1943. Together, these publications between 1914 and 1945 helped establish a corpus of publications that would be the foundation for the field of monastic archaeology.

An example of work undertaken during the interwar period is the MMA's work in Wadi al-Natrun, the location of ancient Sketis, one of the powerful centers for desert monasticism in the *Sayings of the Desert Fathers*. In 1909 and 1911 the Metropolitan sent photographer and architect W. J. Palmer-Jones on two expeditions to Wadi al-Natrun to document the four existing monasteries.¹⁵ The publication of Palmer-Jones's material was delayed, again due to the war, and the MMA asked Hugh Evelyn White to draft a historical narrative that would place Palmer-Jones's photos and drawings in a broader context. Evelyn White took the commission seriously enough that he made a point to visit the monasteries on three different occasions between 1920 and 1921. He assembled a team and gathered his own documentation of the monasteries to amplify the work of Palmer-Jones, before he wrote his archaeological and historical assessment.¹⁶ Becoming completely immersed in the historical sources for early monasticism, Evelyn White became deeply interested in possible locations of the ancient sites of Kellia, Nitria, and Sketis, which were still unknown in the 1920s. In the midst of production of the manuscripts, Evelyn White died in 1924. His three-volume study of the monastic communities,

including the publication of Coptic texts from the library at the Monastery of St. Macarius, was posthumously published and edited by the project's architect Walter Hauser in 1926, 1932, and 1933.

The MMA published the two volumes of *The Monastery of Epiphanius* and the first volume of *The Monasteries of the Wādi 'n Natrūn* in 1926. Together, the three books offered a wealth of material. Reviewers of the books commented immediately about the accessibility of Christian Egypt as exhibited in the volumes and the importance of the work being undertaken to document Coptic Christianity. Although no archaeological work was undertaken, the documentation project in Wadi al-Natrun provided the first comprehensive narrative of how the desert became home to one of the most famous monastic communities and survived nomadic attacks, shrinking numbers, and efforts to revitalize the desert.

In an effort to create an evolutionary model of settlement design, Evelyn White identified three phases of monastic construction. The first period consisted of a solitary's dwelling and those who gathered around him in order to imitate the ascetic's mode of living – a model found repeatedly in the fifth- and sixth-century *Saying of the Desert Fathers*. "There was no set plan to which such a settlement should conform," writes Evelyn White.¹⁷ The solitary's cell or cave was, in his reconstruction, surrounded in a haphazard way with single room occupancy dwellings, which were "mere holes hewn in the rock and eked out with little rude masonry, or cabins built of stone fragments and roofed with reeds."¹⁸ This description accords well with the earlier nineteenth-century perceptions of monastic settlements. The second phase developed early by the end of the fourth century, when four monastic communities built churches. Even after the modern excavations in Wadi al-Natrun, little evidence exists for churches in Wadi al-Natrun before the sixth century and only a few churches in remote areas can be confidently dated to the late fourth or early fifth century in all of Egypt.¹⁹ Therefore, Evelyn White's report that the churches were "mere shells of undressed stones with rough piers or pillars supporting a roof or palm logs thatched over with reeds" is a speculative reconstruction inspired more by the *Sayings* than by any actual physical evidence.²⁰ Evelyn White's third phase marked a period of recovery for the monastic communities after a series of raids by desert Bedouins. The decision was then made to build towers into which monastics could retreat and escape further harm. But this period did not mark the shift to communal monasticism. Evelyn White explains: "Coenobitism did not replace the earlier mode of life in the four settlements, but the eremitical system was naturally and unconsciously modified; the cells were tending to draw together and to form groups ... This tendency cannot well be measured but it definitely existed in the seventh and following centuries."²¹ In particular, Evelyn White attributes the seventh century with the emergence of the dwelling houses, or *manshūbiyyāt* (Ar. "dwelling

places”) as units within the *laura* or loose community. These structures are ones that he observed over and over again as he explored the desert. He explains how the monks lived: “Each monk had his separate cell, and we may picture the whole structure as a small enclosure in which the cells and other buildings were ranged round a central court. Though walled like the establishment of a well-to-do fellah at the present day, these dwellings were not fortified.”²² The lack of fortification at the sites proved significant in the last substantial attack on the monasteries in the early ninth century.²³ The substantial rebuilding may explain why the earliest remains at the existing monasteries at Wadi al-Natrun are not much earlier than the ninth century.²⁴

The preceding narrative of the evolution of the monastic desertscape was in fact a carefully crafted mindscape based entirely on written sources. The 1933 publication of “Part III: The Architecture and Archaeology” in *The Monasteries of the Wādi ‘n Natrūn* series was the first material assessment of the existing remains, but without any actual archaeological work conducted by members of the Metropolitan. For Evelyn White, archaeology did not refer to actual excavations, but rather to the material remains that were not buildings. Although he included “archaeology” in his title, of the 111 times the word occurs, only once does he use the word to state that an earlier traveler to the Monastery of the Syrians failed to pay attention to the “architecture and archaeology of this monastery.”²⁵ In looking more broadly at “archaeological” evidence, it occurs only ten times and is often paired with “architectural” evidence so that the terms appear to be interchangeable.

Interestingly, Evelyn White mentions excavation only eight times in the text and usually in the context of the lack of any work in the region. The word that he prefers to use when discussing archaeological remains is “ruins.” He uses either “ruins” or “ruined” in association with cells and buildings more than 100 times in his discussion. For example, when commenting on the presence of twenty-seven monastic structures still visible around the Monastery of St. Macarius, he observes: “Natural decay and the ravages of monks both in past and present times have reduced these buildings to utter ruin ... The interiors are choked with rubbish and drift sand, and detailed description must await until excavation has revealed their plans and arrangements.”²⁶ In a note associated with the remains outside of the monastery, Evelyn White states:

Unfortunately the day for the excavation of these ruins is probably remote, though the light which will then be thrown on Egyptian monasticism is likely to be great ... The excavator of these ruins must not be content with the late mediaeval plan alone; it is for him to recover, if he can, remains of the earlier cells destroyed by the Arab raiders in the early IX century. Possibly substantial remains of the VII, VI, and even earlier centuries may be brought to light.²⁷

Given Evelyn White's extensive documentation of numerous areas worthy of archaeological research, it is surprising that in his epilogue he did not call for systematic excavations. The list of action items was expressly architectural in nature and perhaps reflects more the voice of Walter Hauser, the architect editing the work, than that of Evelyn White.

In reviewing the 1933 volume for the *American Journal of Archaeology*, Kenneth Conant agreed with Evelyn White, calling the archaeological remains "jumbled wrecks" of monastic buildings. Their value lay more with "what they indicate regarding Christian antiquities in Egypt" than for the buildings themselves.²⁸ Even within America's premier journal dedicated to archaeology, the Byzantine, monastic remains resembled no more than "wrecks" of antiquity. Of course the larger issue was also the fact that Conant and others missed the importance that much of the early history that Evelyn White constructed was based not on any excavated evidence, but on artifacts collected and present in the pseudo-museums housed within each monastery. Evelyn White's history of the rise and evolution of monasticism from the fourth to the ninth century was based on church histories, travelogues, and highly didactic monastic literature.²⁹ F. Ll. Griffith noted this important point in his review, stating: "The remains of the earlier stages, down to the ninth century, are indeed buried under heaps of sand and debris, and their examination can only be undertaken when permission can be obtained for systematic excavation."³⁰ While Griffith acknowledged the lack of seven centuries of archaeological evidence to substantiate the narrative of the early history of monasticism, Evelyn White's deft skill in weaving together a variety of historical sources offered an authoritative voice to how one could understand the evolution of monasticism and its placement in the landscape. With the publication of the 1933 volume, the perception of desert monasticism as a linear progression from caves, to communal dwellings, to the wall fortresses, complete with towers, was firmly in place.

MONASTIC ARCHAEOLOGY FROM 1945 TO THE 1980S

After World War II, the first excavation of a site selected purely for its merits as a Coptic monastic settlement was undertaken by the *Société d'Archéologie Copte* (SAC) in 1948 and 1949.³¹ Founded in 1934 by Mirrit Boutros Ghali initially as the *Association des Amis de l'Art Copte et des Eglises Coptes*, by 1937 the name was changed to the *Société d'Archéologie Copte* by the efforts of Secretary General Charles Bachatly,³² who convinced his colleagues of the importance of having publications dedicated to the material culture, including archaeology, of Coptic history.³³ The SAC's commitment to publish in English, French, and Arabic signaled the importance of making material on Coptic culture available to a wide audience. The organization was and continues to be separate from ecclesiastical support of the Coptic church and did not receive support from



13. Stone walls of a monastic settlement at the Topos of Phoibammon in the Rock, south of Thebes. The footpath through the wadi to the community is visible in the upper left of the photograph.

any foreign agencies or museums. The SAC selected a site in a remote location, south of the Theban valleys in the cleft of a wadi. The site's documentary evidence suggested the name of the community was the Holy Topos of Apa Phoibammon (see Fig. 13).

Secretary General Charles Bachatly directed the excavations for the SAC during the two years. However, as they did for the excavations of the first part of the century, political events would interfere with publication. As a result of the Egyptian Revolution in 1952, political upheaval and an organization without large institutional support adversely affected the ability of the SAC to offer a significant publication for Byzantine archaeologists and specialists in Coptic studies. Work progressed toward publication in the 1950s with preliminary publications,³⁴ but when the project's director, Charles Bachatly, died in 1957, work slowed.³⁵ The three-volume publication, produced by the SAC, issued its first volume in 1961 on the archaeobotanical remains; it was the first scientific study of the archaeobotanical remains from a Coptic site. The volume was a catalog of small finds and did not provide a historical or narrative context for the excavated material. The second volume, from

1965, included the publication of all the epigraphic evidence along with the ostraca excavated at the site. This volume found a larger audience, as several linguists and epigraphists working in Egypt considered it a resource. Finally in 1981, nearly thirty years after the excavations, Antoine Khater and O. H. E. Khs-Burmester published the final volume on the archaeology. The discussion of the actual work carried out on the site was slim. The discussion included an analysis of which Phoibammon was the namesake for the community, the assertion that the monastery was a Pachomian monastery of the fourth century, and a brief overview (only two pages) of the archaeological finds. The most valuable part of the volume is still the extensive photo documentation of the site, finds, and in-progress excavation. It is unfortunate that the excavation work was not fully published. The assertion that the monastery was Pachomian and also dating to the fourth century was later questioned by several scholars, but most thoroughly examined by Martin Krause in the 1980s. He challenged the fourth-century dating based on Theban documentary evidence and whether Pachomius was known to have established settlements far into the desert.³⁶

The work by the SAC had the potential to create a new era for monastic archaeology, but political events and human tragedy overshadowed the SAC's ambitions. The three volumes were never reviewed in major archaeological or historical journals, unlike the publications of work in Bawit, Saqqara, Shaykh 'Abd al-Qurnah, and Wadi al-Natrun. What Evelyn White offered was an easily accessible history of Egyptian Byzantine monasticism. The SAC volumes could not, given their resources, produce work that would rival that of the MMA or IFAO. Despite the SAC's inclusion of a groundbreaking scientific volume on seeds and plants found at the monastic site, the lack of a cohesive introduction to the site could offer little to those not interested in archaeobotany. Finally, the lack of any comprehensive treatment of archaeological work meant the excavations could not be placed within any wider discussions of Egyptian monasticism or Byzantine monasticism more generally.

The first excavation to truly mark the shift into modern archaeology was at Kellia in 1964 in the Delta. The site of Kellia, or the Cells, in Lower Egypt is perhaps the best-known monastic community.³⁷ This is due in large part to the presence of Kellia as one of the preeminent centers for the Desert Fathers. Nitria, Pherme, and Sketis often appeared with Kellia in monastic literature as monks traveled between the locations, visiting each other and offering spiritual advice. Together, the four locations created the iconic Egyptian desert that would center prominently in monastic literature in Western Christian monasticism. Kellia was closely linked with a satellite settlement called Pherme, which emerged as a natural expansion of Kellia's population. Early monastic authors initially explained the settlement's evolution as a response to the increased noise and popularity of Kellia.

Efforts by nineteenth- and early twentieth-century scholars to locate Kellia and Pherme were fruitless until the 1960s. The search began in the 1920s with the work of Evelyn White as he poured over the ancient monastic sources to try to determine the relative geographical relationship between the settlements. He, like others of his time, read the monastic sources with an eye to mine them for their historical content, for he believed the texts were reliable third- and fourth-century witnesses to the physical realities of Late Antique Egypt. He was successful in positing the location for ancient Nitria at the site of al-Barnuji.³⁸ He used an etymological argument to link the contemporary Arabic city of al-Muna in the Delta to the Coptic word for monastery (*pimonē*).³⁹ His argument was found in the 1932 publication on Wadi al-Natrun, although he had worked out the association earlier during his work on the manuscript after his three visits to Egypt. His death and the delay in publication brought his ideas to light just as two other scholars presented their ideas.

In 1932, Prince Omar Toussoun (1872–1944), an Egyptian intellectual and patron of Coptic history, excavated a site about 32 kilometers west of Wadi al-Natrun, named Jabal Khashm al-Qu'ud, that he proposed was the site of ancient Kellia.⁴⁰ As an honorary president of the SAC with a keen interest in the history of early monasticism, Toussoun brought his interest in geography and agriculture to his interest in archaeology and published his first study of the monasteries of Wadi al-Natrun in 1931.⁴¹ Despite his excavation of a clearly monastic settlement at Jabal Khashm al-Qu'ud, his attribution of the site as Kellia did not convince many scholars. The settlement was too small and did not align with historical sources with regard to the site's geographical position. In the same year, Evelyn White's publication on the topography of the early monastic communities was published and offered a different location, one that was much farther away from Wadi al-Natrun and to the northeast. A few years later, A. F. C. de Cosson offered additional support for Evelyn White's link between Kellia and modern al-Muna. The collaborative work of Antoine Guillaumont (Collège de France), François Daumas (IFAO), and Rodolphe Kasser (Université de Genève) in the late 1960s proved de Cosson and Evelyn White were correct in locating Kellia to the northeast of Sketis.⁴²

The site is located 11 kilometers south of al-Barnuji, near the Nubariyyah canal.⁴³ The excavations at Kellia, which continued from 1964 until 2005, revealed a densely built settlement covering seven distinct areas with a combined total of at least 1,500 monastic buildings.⁴⁴ Some buildings had more than seventy-five rooms, whereas others were smaller, with only twenty to twenty-five rooms. The discovery of Kellia more than doubled the existing material remains for monastic built communities and significantly challenged the earlier perceptions of desert monasticism as simple, isolated, and remote.

The excavations at Kellia between 1964 and 1990 were carried out by a combined international effort by three different missions: the *Institut français*

d'archéologie orientale (IFAO), the *Mission suisse d'archéologie copte* (MSAC) at the University of Geneva, and the *Egyptian Antiquities Organization* (EAO), now known as the *Supreme Council of Antiquities* (SCA). The French and Swiss missions worked in collaboration to tackle the 12,600-hectare site, which offered ample opportunities for research. The work was also partially driven by the encroachment of agricultural development that was clearly threatening the existing monuments. Thus, the work at Kellia was the first example of a monastic site studied as a result of salvage or rescue archaeology, signaling a significant change in attitude toward monastic remains. Whereas once the presence of such mud brick “ruins” would have been seen as a barrier to progress, the late 1960s witnessed a nascent argument for saving Byzantine remains.

The five more densely settled areas that comprise the site of Kellia include, from west to east, Quṣūr al-Wahaydah (QW), Quṣūr er-Ruba’iyyat (QR), Quṣūr al-’Izayla (QIz), Quṣūr al-’Abîd (QA), and Quṣūr ’Īsā (QI). Two smaller settlements, thought to be the location of ancient Pherme, include Quṣūr Higayla (QH-northern Pherme) and Quṣūr ’Irayma (QE-southern Pherme).⁴⁵ The Swiss team began survey work at the eastern sites of QA, QIz, and QI.⁴⁶ At QR, the French team excavated one entire structure, identified as *Kom 219*, which formed the basis for understanding the archaeology and stratigraphy for the entire area.⁴⁷ The Swiss mission also added the survey of the smaller settlements of QH and QE (see Fig. 14). Excavations continued at QR with the examination of eleven additional monastic buildings, which provide a settlement typology that would contribute the first archaeologically based chronology of Byzantine monasticism.

The working typology presented the following conclusions of monastic habitation at Kellia. The observations were based on the number of “oratories” or spaces equipped with a central niche in the east wall, the number of kitchens, and then rooms for sleeping and storage. First, dwellings for solitaries seemed extremely rare and uncommon at Kellia. More common, but certainly not dominant at Kellia, were structures that could have housed three or four monks, with the belief that each oratory and side room was the residence of a single occupant. In each example a wall framed an interior courtyard and thus defined the residential space from other buildings at the site. Further excavation of larger residences showed that Kellia had several large, multiroomed complexes, and some were equipped with towers. In summarizing the findings in 1991, Rene-Georges Coquin wrote:

The inhabitants of the Kellia were hermits, not cenobites, living an almost autarchic life within their hermitages ... However, the archaeological data show that this primitive ideal was gradually weakened. With larger numbers in the same hermitage, the hermits regrouped behind walls and with the possibility of taking refuge in a tower ... It appears that life became

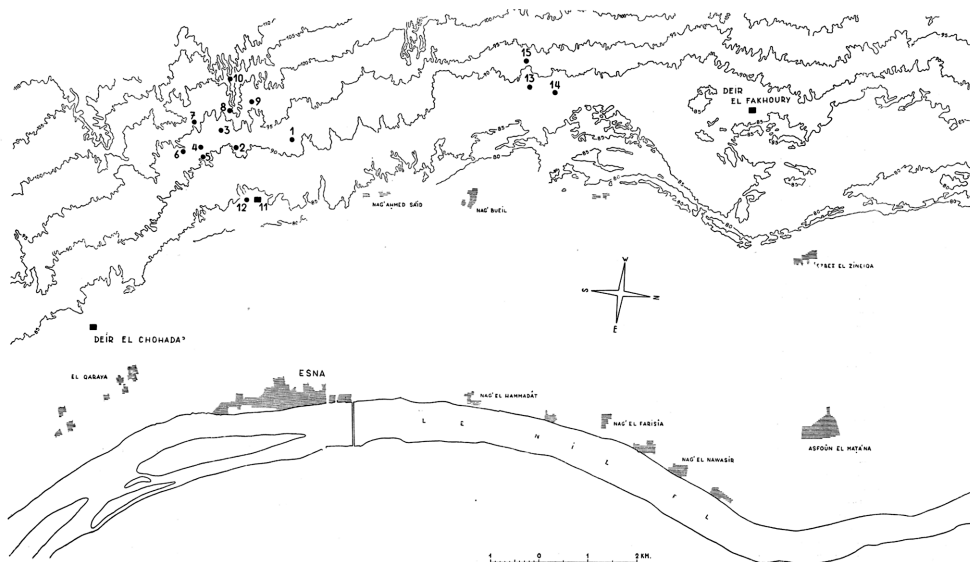


14. Mud brick construction of an excavated monastic residence, or dwelling place, at Kellia with the crests of other, unexcavated residences on the horizon.

less eremitic and less harsh. All the same, some appear to have remained faithful to the unwritten rule of the earliest times.⁴⁸

Coquin's summary illustrates the beginning of a change in the perceptions of how desert monasticism evolved, but it was still a linear development from the simplicity of the early age to the weakening of resolve to embrace a life of greater ease and comfort. While work progressed at Kellia, another excavation began in 1967 in the south at Esna. Together the two sites would provide an entirely new corpus of evidence that differed substantially from the material recovered from the monasteries of Apa Jeremias, Apa Apollo, Apa Phoibammon, and Apa Epiphanius.

The history of interest in Esna began with Archibald H. Sayce, who first reported on the structures in a letter in 1895 for the *American Journal of Archaeology*. He worked that year in Esna, closer to the Nile, and described how the fellahen had discovered "two subterranean Coptic churches, and what was apparently the house of the priest, also subterranean, and all, of course, now buried under the sand. Such subterranean buildings must be of an early date, as they imply the Christians had to conceal themselves

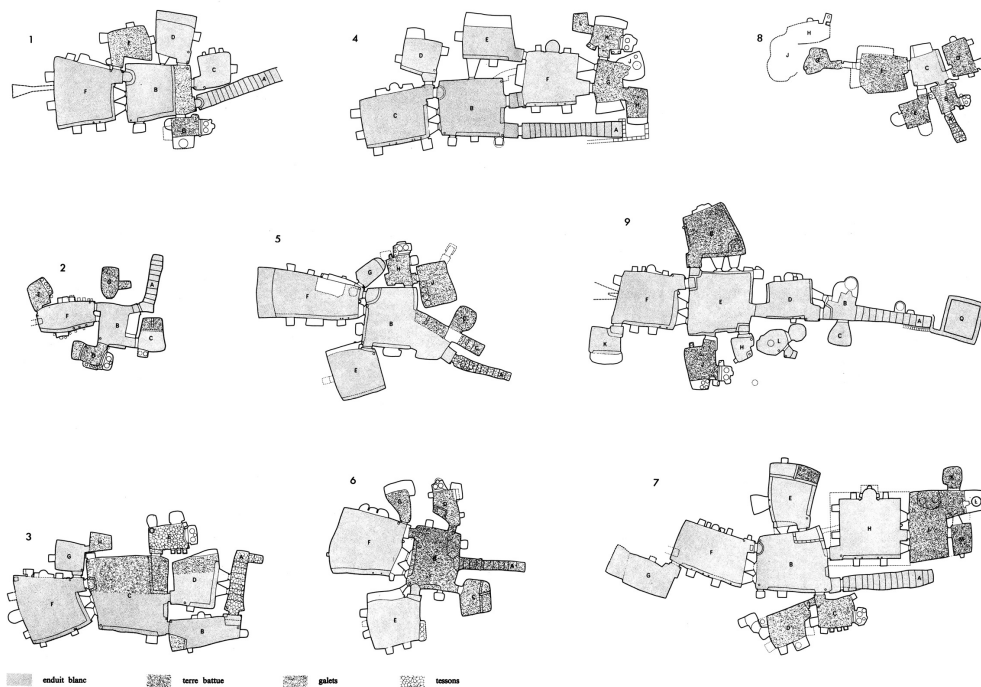


15. Map of the desert west of the Nile by Esna showing the locations of the fifteen residences in relationship to the two Coptic churches: Dayr al-Shuhada' and Dayr al-Fakhuri.

from persecution.”⁴⁹ The discovery in 1895 was significant, as Sayce states vandalism quickly followed the discovery. On his own inspection at the site just six days later he reports: “Mohammedan fanaticism had already defaced or destroyed most of the saints’ heads which covered the east wall of one of the churches.”⁵⁰ Fortunately, an epigraphist visited the intriguing site before the entire defacement of the paintings and copied Coptic inscriptions; and Sayce was concerned about the site, for he believed the buildings to be “excellent specimens of Byzantine work,” which would not survive the “Mohammedan iconoclasts.”⁵¹ The site was not studied again until a brief examination in the mid-twentieth century by Francis ‘Abd el-Malek.⁵²

The settlement was fully examined between 1967 and 1968 when the French Institute dedicated two seasons for the excavation and documentation of fifteen monastic residences (see Fig. 15).⁵³ The four-volume publication for the site provided one of the first indications of the extensive history to be gleaned from a small settlement.⁵⁴ The first volume provided a discussion of the archaeology and inscriptions of each of the buildings. The second and third volumes detailed architectural plans and the small finds, such as ceramics and objects, in a catalog. The fourth volume offered a comprehensive history of the site that integrated history, archaeology, and architecture.

The fifteen complexes cluster into three groups. The first includes ten multiroomed structures and is located about 6 kilometers west of the Nile. The second group includes two smaller complexes, which do not appear to be for



16. Plans of Hermitages at Esna.

domestic habitation. The third group is located about 5 kilometers north of the first cluster and includes three structures that are more similar to the second group of nondomestic structures than the uniform residences located near the Nile. Serge Sauneron describes dwellings 1–9 as “hermitages” because he believes they housed only two monks, and a protective wall did not enclose the structures. The nine buildings with the most uniform planning reflect a clear pattern of a staircase, open-air courtyard, and three to four additional rooms extending from the courtyard (see Fig. 16). In assessing the high quality of the painting, the presence of inscriptions, the use of subterranean planning, and the uniformity of the constructions, Sauneron believed monastic architects could be responsible for such designs. He asserted that the monks could in fact be the builders of such complexes and it would have reflected their professional skills as architects and masons.⁵⁵ In his reconstruction, Sauneron recognized the high level of skill required for building into the desert floor and working with the natural environment to design the underground structures. Since their discovery, the structures have been described by a variety of terms such as “underground” or “subterranean” because of the layout and construction that had a set of rooms carved into the desert basin rather than built at ground level.⁵⁶ The Esna geotectures, defined as spaces “below ground at any depth

and for any purpose,” reflect a conscious decision to build into the physical landscape in a way not observed previously.⁵⁷

The three excavations undertaken at monastic sites of Esna, Kellia, and south of Thebes after World War II demonstrate a shift in professional, archaeological interest in Byzantine archaeology. However, for this period, the sites were described not in terms of their Byzantine nature, but rather their Coptic characteristics as the designation reflected the very complex, contemporary concerns of Egyptian national identity, Coptic identity, and the related development of scholarly interest in the archaeology of Egypt’s Christian past. While the ethnic identity separated the material from earlier Roman – meaning pagan – material and from later Islamic – meaning Muslim – material, it did blur the distinctions of what it might mean for there to be any Byzantine material in Egypt. It would also further separate Egypt’s Byzantine remains as being more unusual than Late Antique contemporaries.

APPROACHES TO THE FIELD OF COPTIC AND BYZANTINE ARCHAEOLOGY

The field of monastic archaeology is relatively new in the broader examination of Western and Byzantine monastic history. The adoption of new methods within archaeology such as surface survey, landscape archaeology, and gender archaeology is producing results that are significantly expanding how we study Western European Christian and Eastern Buddhist monasticism.⁵⁸ But the same level of theorization present in these two other regions with homosocial communities does not exist to the same degree in Byzantine studies. New directions of inquiry into monastic life include the spatial analysis of monastic settlements and their locations relative to other settlements; the identification of rural monastic settlements previously undocumented; and the impact of gender in monastic consumption habits and medical treatment.⁵⁹ A great need exists, therefore, for more comprehensive and interdisciplinary studies on monastic life and the ways in which the literary, documentary, and physical evidence can be brought together for the writing of a much more complete history of monasticism.

Only a small group of archaeologists have examined the earliest physical remains of Christian monasticism at its birthplace in Egypt and Syria, and its slightly later development in Palestine.⁶⁰ In fact, there are few archaeologists today who would identify themselves as specialists in Byzantine Egypt. Fewer than 5 percent of the 275 members of the *International Association for Coptic Studies* (IACS) are archaeologists.⁶¹ The percentage rises if we consider those who are art historians or text specialists who work with archaeological projects and focus on material culture. Egypt is a growing area of specialization for Late

Antique scholars, as Late Antique texts lend themselves to pose postmodern readings of the body, community, and the cultivation of the self.⁶² The literary turn, for example, in Late Antique studies illustrates the robustness of monasticism and early Christian studies for examination in the Egyptian milieu.⁶³ Additionally, the wealth of Egyptian papyrological evidence, often recovered through excavation now, provides a rich corpus of documentary evidence to examine economic, social, and religious life in ways not previously available to scholars working in other areas of the Eastern Mediterranean world.⁶⁴ Despite these advances in the study of early monasticism, the material history of the movement has been overlooked, and monastic archaeology is in dire need of a theoretical turn of its own.

An additional challenge is the fact that the investigation of monasticism in Egypt has been examined almost exclusively from its point of origin in the late third and early fourth centuries until the Arab conquest in the seventh century. This truncated chronological view excludes consideration of Christian monasticism as it continued to flourish after the Byzantine period under Islamic control through the fourteenth century. Recent studies in the history of medieval Arab Christianity are filling this lacuna.⁶⁵ But very little work has been devoted to the known archaeological remains of later Coptic monasteries. With the Arab conquest in 641 CE, Egypt ostensibly falls outside of the Byzantine Empire and therefore work on settlements that are Christian, or perhaps culturally more aligned with Byzantium, are identified as belonging to the Islamic period or are excluded entirely. The nomenclature quickly becomes cumbersome as to whether one should identify a site as Late Roman, Byzantine, Islamic, or Late Antique. Each classification has benefits and limitations, and they also reflect the preferences and training of the archaeologists and historians. What is Late Roman to one scholar may be considered Late Antique or Byzantine to another.

Some may see the use of “Coptic” to be an adequate compromise, as it designates an ethnic designation for Egyptian, associated primarily with Christians, and avoids the whole matter of chronological divisions. However, the term “Coptic” has had a difficult place in the discourse of art, archaeology, and architecture in particular. As expressed in the Introduction, the term is often used to devalue the material remains of Egypt’s Christian past, separating them out as in some form inferior and crude in comparison with those of other regions of the Byzantine Empire. The difficulty increases when political events such as the conquest of Egypt by the Arabs in the mid-seventh century brought a definitive end to Byzantine political control of the region. Therefore, despite the cultural linkages to the Byzantine East and other Eastern Christian communities, the material remains of Egypt’s Christians shifted to be identified by their racial identity, as Coptic, which does not emerge until later in the medieval period. The advent of “Late Antiquity” as a broad, collective term

has created a religiously, culturally, and politically neutral way for a variety of scholars to address changes in the first millennium.⁶⁶ The debates about the “long Late Antiquity” and when it applies varies from region to region across Afro-Eurasia and challenges what it means to specialize in Byzantine or Islamic Studies.⁶⁷ It offers a convenient way to speak of events after the rise of the Barracks emperors or the period after Diocletian’s division of the Roman Empire. Yet, even these events are not agreed upon. The end of Late Antiquity is even more fluid.⁶⁸ Some may regard the Arab conquests as offering clear end points in specific regions in the Eastern Mediterranean. And yet, new studies clearly demonstrate the continuity of other cultural traditions that do not exhibit a clear ideological or cultural break after the conquests.⁶⁹ Even the rise of Islam and the Umayyad Caliphate is being seen as part of Late Antiquity, and not until in the late eighth century is the identity of an Islamic caliphate an entity that is no longer Late Antique but instead reflects the medieval world.⁷⁰ I believe the complexities of finding the appropriate terminology for naming time is critical and especially relevant for Egypt in the first millennium. While Coptic offers a way to distinguish Egyptian Christian culture from what would emerge later, it is a term that creates a false division that separates the culture and linguistic ties Egyptian Christians had with other Christian communities in the Eastern Mediterranean.

In the case of Egypt, monastic archaeology falls outside of the traditional parameters constructed by modern academics and professional organizations. It pertains, but is not exclusive, to Byzantine, Roman, and Islamic studies. Hence, drawing on the Christian identity of its subjects, the field is most frequently associated with publications and conferences relating to Coptology, with a focus on religious and textual studies. This cultural home, for similar reasons, limits the connections of the archaeology, architecture, and art with the work of other scholars, whose own work may benefit from comparative analysis with Egyptian monastic material.

One of the first efforts to present a broad context for the importance of Coptic archaeology, and monastic archaeology in particular, was nestled in a much larger, comprehensive book entitled *Christian Egypt: Ancient and Modern*. Published by the French Institute in 1965 and then later reissued in 1977 by the American University in Cairo Press, *Christian Egypt* was written by Otto Meinardus, an expert in Coptic Studies and a member of the SAC.⁷¹ In his preface to the volume, Henry Habib Ayrout argued for the importance of the book for the study of Coptic archaeology in 1965: “The Christian archaeology of Egypt should be known not only on account of its importance for the history of art, or for the sake of history itself, but as a source of instruction for interpreting the present situation, and as a monument of uninterrupted life.”⁷² He continued to state that while the Christian remains in other parts of the Mediterranean world were entirely lost, Egypt’s Christian monuments

still existed and were still used. In his introduction, Meinardus explains his purpose for writing as to offer a historical account of Christian Egypt, but also to provide the first in-depth guidebook to the Coptic monuments. As tourism was developing again in Egypt, Meinardus lamented about tourists overlooking Christian monuments. His complaint sounds very similar to the words voiced by Alfred Butler in the 1880s. Meinardus explains: "Indeed, one of the objects of this present volume is to encourage scholars and visitors to depart from the beaten tracks of the tourists, and to discover for themselves some of the ancient and modern Christian monuments ... Christian Egypt, with its long and distinguished history, can be rediscovered."⁷³ Meinardus's discussion of monasticism in *Christian Egypt* was drawn in great part from his 1961 book *Monks and Monasteries of the Egyptian Deserts*. But since the latter publication was available only in Egypt in the early 1960s, it was not well known outside the country. Meinardus had visited all of the monastic sites he discussed, but he was not an archaeologist, and therefore his treatment of the archaeological material was solely descriptive.

The first English volume to provide an overview of monastic archaeology for general readers was C. C. Walters's *Monastic Archaeology in Egypt*.⁷⁴ Its publication in 1974 was conveniently timed to include the recent discoveries at Kellia and Esna in the survey. In his preface, Walters makes a case for why monastic archaeology required a separate volume from all other treatments of Christian or Byzantine material in Egypt:

Until recently, few exclusively monastic sites had been the subject of a scientific excavation, and, where this had occurred, publication was often lamentable. With the exception of works by such men as Evelyn White and Monneret de Villard, monastic culture has only been considered within the broader spectrum of early Christian civilization in Egypt, and this has meant piecemeal treatment of a subject that deserves separate consideration. The lack of such a study has been increasingly felt in recent years, as interest in the subject has increased, and work in the field has yielded such startling results.⁷⁵

Walters was not trained as an archaeologist, but rather as an Egyptologist and Coptologist. He wrote a Coptic grammar and published a report on the excavated wall paintings from Tebtunis; thus he exhibited a broad interest in the material remains of Coptic Egypt. His lack of archaeological training is evident in the book, as chapters move from surveys of architectural features, to painting motifs, to burial customs without an overarching narrative. One of the unfortunate flaws of the book was its physical production, in which notes and bibliography were interspersed in a way that still requires patience to navigate. Prominent Egyptologist Alan B. Lloyd recognized the merits of the volume, but also recognized its physical design flaws in limiting its usability.

In his review he offered an assessment of the state of Coptic archaeology as a field in 1975:

The quality of Coptic field-archaeology, like that in Egyptology, has not been of the highest, particularly when it has been in the hands of Egyptologists themselves, who have usually been more embarrassed than gratified by the presence of Coptic levels and have, consequently, destroyed them as quickly as possible with the most cursory of descriptions. Priceless evidence has thereby all too often been lost beyond recall. Furthermore, a high proportion of the evidence rests in museums ... This, together with the preceding point, has created the grimmest of conditions for the student of Coptic archaeology who attempts to deal with chronological problems. Yet, another difficulty is the fact that the material culture of Christian Egypt is far from being an isolated phenomenon. It draws elements from the Hellenistic traditions of Egypt, Byzantium, Persia, and Syria, to name but the most obvious sources, and demands in the student a wide acquaintance with the artistic world of late antiquity and the early medieval period.⁷⁶

Lloyd's comments offered a "state-of-the-field" assessment that highlights the disinterest in Coptic material remains and the need for diverse skills to properly contextualize and study Coptic archaeology. It is curious to note in Lloyd's comments that he does not address monastic archaeology in particular, the subject of the book under review, but rather the broader category of all Coptic archaeology, which he sees as being distinct from Byzantine archaeology.

Walter's publication was superseded in 1978 by Alexander Badawy's *Coptic Art and Archaeology: The Art of Christian Egyptians from the Late Antique to the Middle Ages*, despite the book's broader focus on ecclesiastical, monastic, and nonmonastic remains.⁷⁷ Whereas Walters's work was a rather cumbersome collection of sites and ideas, Badawy's examination of Coptic material culture presented discrete areas of art and architecture for a broader audience and it became, and still is, an often-cited resource for Coptic archaeology. As an architect, Badawy was keen to represent monumental architecture and therefore present monasticism within the framework of famous monasteries with memorable churches and impressive stonework.⁷⁸ His volume highlighted, for example, the early twentieth-century excavations at the Monastery of Apa Jeremias at Saqqara and at the Monastery of Apa Apollo at Bawit, and included the recent work at Kellia and Esna.

In his discussion of architecture, Badawy examined monasteries by dividing the known archaeological sites into those that were fortified and unfortified, meaning those with or without large defensive walls. Badawy then outlined a linear development of monastic architecture that basically placed single-roomed settlements at one end of the developmental spectrum and walled, multibuilding settlements at the other end. He claimed that monks

first reused pharaonic tombs in the fifth or sixth centuries.⁷⁹ He then outlined how monks required more permanent dwellings. By the fourth and fifth centuries, he argued, monks built clusters of little cells to form a *laura*, as seen in the *Sayings of the Desert Fathers* and the *Lausiac History*.⁸⁰ Then finally in the sixth and seventh centuries, monks built large monastic complexes such as those found in Upper Egypt in the Theban hills, in Middle Egypt at Bawit, and in Lower Egypt at Saqqara. It was not until the ninth century, with the very real threat of nomadic raids, according to Badawy, that the monks enclosed and fortified their communities behind impenetrable walls.⁸¹ He pointed to the massive defensive walls still existing at the monasteries in Wadi al-Natrun or by the Red Sea as proof.⁸² His perception of the changes to the monastic landscape followed the model first presented by Evelyn White in 1933 for Wadi al-Natrun.

Badawy's architectural narrative of monastic origins presents an evolutionary model of settlement design that presumed a natural progression from simple structures to complex ones. Ecclesiastical architecture evolved along a similar path such that churches were initially designed as central apse basilicas to then evolve in the medieval period into churches with three altars and covered with twelve domes.⁸³ The linear, evolutionary model is not necessary an inappropriate one, but it creates a myopic view of how communities built and leaves little room for variation. The earliest settlements that Badawy considered are the cells abutting enclosure walls at Abydos, tombs in Thebes, and in tomb chapels. He described one dwelling belong to a monk named Mena:

Even such an uninspiring hole in the rock as that at Abydos was transformed by a hermit of the fifth or sixth centuries into a comfortable and tidy habitation. A rubble wall across the gaping south mouth of the cave formed a front living room furnished with a bench cut in the bedrock, an oven, and a closet for provisions. Beyond this room was an oratory with a niche oriented east for the altar and a window admitting a faint ray of light. Approximately 39 pegs and hooks in neat array on the walls and several sacred designs and texts revealed the order of godliness of the hermit Mena.⁸⁴

Similar signs of adaptive reuse and modification are found in the numerous tombs at Banī Hassan, Birsha, Shaykh Sa'īd, Amarna, and Thebes. Throughout Badawy's overview he mentions at several points that many sites were, in the late 1970s, not properly excavated or understood. Fortunately, the excavation and survey work conducted since the 1970s provides ample material to further refine and expand our understanding of monastic archaeology.

A few observations are important about the state of Byzantine archaeology in Egypt between 1914 and the 1980s. First, a more pervasive Coptic, or Egyptian, identity firmly replaced the idea of Egypt as a place with ties to Byzantium. The result of this shift in identity reflected contemporary nationalist

concerns within Egypt as much as it reflected a gulf between Egypt and the rest of Byzantium. Second, the articulation of archaeology as a scientific field of study that was not just a reference to artifacts or pieces of art, but was also a struggle to improve the methodology of excavation during the twentieth century. Often Coptic archaeology was a flexible term to stand in for Christian architecture or art, but it rarely designated the fieldwork of archaeology itself. If scholars working in Egypt could not articulate a sense of Coptic archaeology as a field, it was impossible to cast the work as part of the larger discipline of Byzantine archaeology. Third, the selected works of Meinardus, Walters, and Badawy illustrate the deep need by the 1980s for archaeologists, trained in the field of Byzantine archaeology, to offer a comprehensive treatment of the archaeological remains of Byzantine Egypt for a wider audience.

As an illustration of these challenges, the first symposium gathered to discuss Coptic archaeology did not take place until 1996. Convened by the SAC and the *Supreme Council of Antiquities* (SCA) in Cairo, seventy-three scholars gathered to present work on current excavation projects and to discuss recommendations associated with archaeology and preservation of Coptic remains. In his opening remarks, Wassif Boutros Ghali, president of the SAC, drew attention to the lack of Coptic excavations since Clédat's work in 1900. He stressed that between 1901 and 1996 there were only "thirteen major publications" addressing Coptic archaeology and only a few dated after the 1960s.⁸⁵ Of the four major recommendations drawn up by the symposium attendees, the first offered three specific concerns about archaeology. First, the group asked the SCA to limit or prohibit any new excavations at Coptic sites "until the results of all sites already excavated are published."⁸⁶ Second, they encouraged all Egyptian archaeologists to consider the *Bulletin de la Société d'Archéologie Copte* as the most appropriate place to publish their excavation results, since the journal was the only one in the world dedicated exclusively to Coptic archaeology. Third, they asked the SCA to offer better support to the restoration and cultural management of Coptic monuments "because of the particular nature of their building construction, which makes them more likely to deteriorate than other antique monuments."⁸⁷ This final request encapsulated the continuous challenge for Late Antique buildings that were built more often of mud brick and not of the monumental stones used so frequently during the pharaonic age.

Thankfully, the years since this symposium have seen a rise in more extensive excavations with immediate publication at monastic sites such as Dayr Abu Fanah, Kellia, Naqlun, Thebes, and Wadi al-Natrun,⁸⁸ as well as the restoration and preservation of Coptic wall paintings at the Monastery of St. Antony, the Monastery of St. Paul, and the Red Monastery in Sohag.⁸⁹ These developments certainly illustrate how dramatically the field of Coptic archaeology and preservation has changed since the 1996 symposium.⁹⁰

THEORETICAL SHIFTS IN ARCHAEOLOGY, 1960S–2000S

Just as Coptic archaeology was grappling to find a niche, archaeologists working in Britain and the United States were increasingly dissatisfied with culture-based archaeology. This discontent stemmed from a desire to shift archaeology away from being a descriptive discipline for history and art collections to one that employed more robust anthropological, scientific, and sociological models for interpreting archaeology. The processualists, as they came to be known, shifted their focus away from the classical ties to history and philology to embrace a world of statistics, geography, and middle-range theories.⁹¹ They desired to separate themselves from relying on the texts of antiquity to guide their interpretation of the evidence and to consider other ways to explain the phenomenon of site formation, social hierarchies, and community interactions.

Archaeologists working in other ancient fields, such as classical and medieval archaeology, seemed to see the benefits of this new theoretical shift, which allowed for fresh interpretations of well-known sites. Processual archaeology required a more comprehensive collection of empirical data that quickly expanded the professionalization of most excavation teams. Each person worked within his or her area of expertise, gathering hard scientific data to compute statistical analyses of the materials now recovered in the field. Rather than approaching a site with concrete desires of what to “find,” archaeologists were now allowing the evidence, regardless of period, to offer new stories of a site’s history.

In many ways processual archaeologists were following a multidisciplinary shift that affected many areas from the 1960s to 1970s. Several scholars in anthropology, history, and sociology found forms of structuralism to present intriguing ways to ask new questions. Processualists believed archaeological data could point to patterns or processes that would assist in explaining why the archaeological record formed as it did. Rather than relying on the actions of particular individuals or communities in the past, processualists drew attention to how environments and interactions across space shaped sites, hierarchies, and culture. In particular, processualist archaeologists highlighted the importance of the environment, larger social actors, and repetitive actions as forces shaping the archaeological record.⁹² But such an approach, as with other forms of structuralism, was too reductionist and overlooked the role of human agency, the role of the interpreter (the archaeologist) in (mis)framing the past, and the importance of addressing gender, class, and one’s placement in the environment.⁹³

The shift away from process-based assessments of archaeological material came in the 1980s with the work of Ian Hodder, who argued that positivist interpretations limited our ability to engage with the past. History and visual

culture, he argued, are meaningfully constituted – meaning that archaeology is not just a collection of symbolic beliefs, but rather reflects cultural and social values, and these too, may be known. Most notably, the late twentieth century witnessed an adoption of postprocessual archaeology to address the deficiencies in processual archaeology.⁹⁴ As a theoretical approach, postprocessual archaeologists found comparable dissatisfaction with received knowledge in the postmodernism emerging in history and literary studies. Postprocessualists reject the notion that there are predictable and knowable behaviors that can inform the archaeological record.⁹⁵ In contrast to the processual archaeologists, who identify patterns of specific behavior and processes, postprocessualists look for the signs of the individual, gender, and class in how archaeologists present their interpretation of the evidence.⁹⁶ It is within this new framework that Byzantine and Late Antique archaeologists consider the materiality of the archaeological record, social history, and the role of individuals in creating homes, to name just a few examples.⁹⁷ The catalyst for this methodological shift stems from theory-driven archaeologists and the demonstrated effectiveness of postprocessual theories as seen in the new Brill Series, *Theories and Practice in Late Antique Archaeology*.⁹⁸ As a corrective to the older methodology, postprocessualists employ a variety of perspectives that result in more variegated interpretations of the evidence. For postprocessualists, the archaeologist, the scholar, and the specialist are all contributors to the (mis)reading of the past; their frame of reference is worth scrutiny, as it is through their eyes that we see the past.⁹⁹

The fact that processual and postprocessual archaeology as theoretical approaches had little impact at all on Coptic archaeology is not entirely surprising given the fact that the field itself was still finding its place even in 1996. Unlike the fields of Prehistoric, Classical, Historical, and Medieval archaeology, which had clear identities and well-established traditions of fieldwork prior to the 1960s, Coptic archaeology, and more broadly Byzantine archaeology, did not have a long methodological past to reform. This is particularly important to note, as I have outlined the tenuous nature of the field of archaeology of Byzantine Egypt earlier in this chapter and in Chapter 1. For postprocessualists the past cannot be seen or understood until one sees the present and how our archaeological knowledge was crafted and presented by earlier scholars. If the field was shaped by disgust or dismissal, as it was in the nineteenth century, and then by limited interest and support, as it was in the twentieth century, it is not unexpected that monastic archaeology, like Byzantine archaeology and Byzantium, is an undertheorized and understudied area.¹⁰⁰ So how does one bring a theoretical turn to a field that was and is finally emerging?

The remainder of this chapter is an introduction to a small selection of theoretical models that I believe will be most effective in demonstrating what may be gained by rereading the archaeology of Egypt's monastic landscape in Late

Antiquity. In many ways, the theorists that I employ offer a chance to experiment with the benefits from both processual and postprocessual archaeological theory, as both movements significantly shifted how we see and read archaeological evidence. The theories offer threads or bands that will frame the larger tapestry of the monastic landscape that will be built in the subsequent chapters and highlight how asking new questions about the built environment and the monastic communities responsible for their construction can be seen in their Late Antique context.

THEORETICAL MODELS FOR MONASTIC ARCHAEOLOGY

When I first started thinking about monastic archaeology, I was attracted to notions about sacrality and the divisions between the sacred and the profane as expressed by Mircea Eliade.¹⁰¹ The nature of separation and of pollution seemed to work well with the stories of monasticism in the eyes of monastic authors, but in terms of the archaeological and documentary evidence of the connectivity between monastic communities and others, the spatial binary seemed to be forced.

To engage in monastic archaeology is to study the archaeology of a religion, here Christianity, and belief. It is to study how religious beliefs and activities have shaped material remains for a homosocial community. In fourth-century Egypt, Christians and monks sought to establish their presence by creating new communities. As a result of the convergence of ritual, materiality, domestic residences, and sacred spaces, monastic communities offer an ideal body of evidence for evaluating the archaeology of religion and how religion shapes the landscape.¹⁰² In order to establish the framework for exploring the archaeological and textual material of Late Antique Egypt, we need to set the parameters of what it might mean to study monastic archaeology. Two central themes are necessary. First, what does it mean to study the archaeology of monasticism, with its own unique attributes? Is there an essential quality or difference to the study of monasticism through the examination of archaeological materials? Second, how does the archaeology of monasticism relate to the archaeology of religions, such as Christianity? Does the archaeology of religion help us read and interpret monastic material culture without the need to rely on cultic terms?¹⁰³ What implications could such a rereading have for the examination of monastic built environments that are almost always viewed and understood in religious terms? Does the study of religion and the places where monks lived demand an exclusively religiously imbued reading of the built environment as a sacred landscape?

In practical terms the study of monasticism is an examination of a very particular kind of religious life. It requires us to consider the lives of individuals who seek out a very unique way of inhabiting the world that is distinctive

from the life of nonmonastics. Monks dress differently, often live in homosocial communities, and follow particular diets. They create outward signs of their life that signal to each other and the world that they are engaged in a different kind of work, as members in God's army or as Christ's athletes. In the case of Egypt, the material and textual evidence confirms monks wore special clothes,¹⁰⁴ buried their community members in monastic dress,¹⁰⁵ and built homosocial communities that were intended to be different from other domestic spaces and communities. Given these clear indications of actions guided by religious commitments, it would seem monastic archaeology is a perfect candidate for the study of the archaeology of religion.

One way to begin considering the archaeology of religion is to consider the use of spatial theory to ascertain whether there is a difference to monastic space. Emile Durkheim defined monasticism as thoroughly antithetical to the profane or public life of his day: "[M]an is exhorted to retire completely from the profane in order to live an exclusively religious life. From thence comes monasticism, which artificially organizes a milieu that is apart from, outside of, and closed to the natural milieu where ordinary men live a secular life, and that tends almost to be its antagonist."¹⁰⁶ In Durkheim's opinion, the aim of asceticism was to escape life altogether. The ascetic was able to do this by establishing signs or symbols that marked a space according to its sacred or profane nature. Once these divisions were made, the ascetic could confine himself to the sacred areas exclusively. The truly religious life, as Durkheim describes it, could be found only within the boundaries of an ascetic life in which all things and people were considered components of a space's sacrality. It was therefore important for these holy individuals to reside in areas that were recognized as sacred.

It is tempting to see all spaces as configured and determined by the same religious actions as did Durkheim. Timothy Insoll and others demonstrate that we, as modern consumers and interpreters of the past, should resist this temptation to divide the world between sacred and profane or sacred and secular, for "we have no way of knowing that such a simple distinction was maintained – a definition which furthermore justifies archaeological attention upon 'built' monuments of ritual/religious significance largely divorced from their overall contexts."¹⁰⁷ Although Insoll is specifically addressing the difficulties with the reading and interpreting the archaeology of traditional religions and Islam in West Africa, his analysis of the need to reconsider the impact of religion on material culture is essential for a study of monasticism.¹⁰⁸ Insoll and other archaeologists of religion require us to consider how religion is the "key building block of identity."¹⁰⁹ In assessing monastic archaeology, Christianity is embedded in a wide array of materials that reflect the monastic life. However, what Insoll is also suggesting is that we look more broadly at the presence of religion in the life of all individuals and not just those who self-identify as

religious adherents. What this means in practical terms is that we consider a methodological shift such that, on the one hand, not all religious material is automatically deemed as monastic and thereby sacred in nature, and on the other, that we consider that Christians outside of the monastery may produce, possess, and employ materials that are religious in nature. To widen our point of view regarding the objects of religion is to look “at religion as existing in multiple contexts.”¹¹⁰ In Kim Bowes’s examination of the archaeological remains from the Roman west, she convincingly demonstrates that the material remains of Late Antique monasticism do not differ in substantive ways from the built environments of nonmonastic, Christian communities and that “late antiquity had no distinct ascetic material culture.”¹¹¹ Is this also the case for Byzantine Egypt? In order to consider this question, I turn to three areas that offer a more sophisticated approach to reading archaeology: space, landscape, and things.

Theorizing Space

The earliest texts of monasticism in the Eastern Mediterranean, dating to the fourth and fifth centuries, include accounts of ascetics who were recognized as earthly angels living in sacred spaces.¹¹² Monastics lived in dwellings that were constructed or repurposed specifically to establish a space that would be recognized as a monastic space and therefore served a different purpose than buildings found in other areas. The *Sayings of the Desert Fathers* and the works of great monastic authors such as John Chrysostom,¹¹³ John Cassian,¹¹⁴ Palladius,¹¹⁵ and the numerous vitae of wonder-working saints are all valuable sources for writing the early history of monasticism. These authors deliberately used their writings as vehicles to communicate their vision of true ascetic living, highlighting the more spectacular achievements of those they chose to write about and omitting the more obvious details that might describe the spaces in which monks lived. When physical spaces are mentioned, it is often within the context of allegorical descriptions of the monk as a dwelling.¹¹⁶ The extensive documentary evidence offers more insight into perceptions of monastic built environments. Wills, contracts, and bills of sale indicate how monastics viewed property, building materials, and construction. Yet, we lack any comprehensive building manual or architectural guide for how to design or build a monastic settlement. Without such texts for later periods, we are left to piece together ideas about monastic space from written observations, admonitions against improper behavior, and passing references to the cells of famous monks.

The belief that a space, such as a monastic residence of a famous monk, had the ability to affect an individual is an illustration of Pierre Bourdieu’s understanding of *habitus*.¹¹⁷ As a structuralist theorist, Bourdieu claimed there

was a system of dispositions, or attitudes and behaviors, that people participate in, often unconsciously so, which then creates memories within a space.¹¹⁸ For example, the cell, or the room, set aside for monastic prayer, manual labor, and visitations is the central location within which the monastic *habitus* is created and re-created.¹¹⁹ The cell becomes the physical space for reinforcing the monastic *habitus* as it becomes the embodiment in the fullest sense of monastic ideals and beliefs. As Bourdieu explains more explicitly, the *habitus* may be changed and modified with experience.¹²⁰ Therefore, the monastic *habitus* is not static, but is evolving through the practice of commemorative acts by those who live within the space. Applying Bourdieu's theory suggests monastic adherence to and acceptance of the cell's importance is essential for making progress. The longer one remains within the cell, the greater the cell's physical value. By reading monastic space with Bourdieu, the perception of monastic space becomes multifunctional. The collective memory is thereby defined by specific behaviors; while remaining inside the cell, a monk weaves baskets, braids rope, recites prayers, and offers hospitality. The cell is equally a social space where one honors guests and manages challenges to one's solitude and routine. Thereby, the cell and its presence within a larger community help define the monastic *habitus*.

Anthony Giddens, like Bourdieu, also provides a structuralist view of space within a community. He considers the monastic community as an agent that continually reconstitutes spatial organization through social relations.¹²¹ We will see the repeated reordering of space most directly in monastic contracts and bequeaths. In the legal documents, monastics direct division of cells, secure lines of inheritance, and become responsible for property outside of the monastic settlement. Giddens would frame the monastic community as part of a much larger communal effort to define a group's identity. Physical evidence of the redefining effort is best exhibited in the series of dipinti painted over and near earlier petitions on several walls of monastic spaces. For instance, a wall in Hermitage 4 at Esna shows the presence of a Coptic inscription (#48) painted between two earlier geometric designs and to the right of an earlier, and more prominent, inscription (see Fig. 17). The inscription is actually a collection of short *Sayings* that could be used for a variety of encounters within the space. The presence of such inscriptions, painted both for monastic residents and for guests, reinforces the habits and customs of marking and commemorating one's presence within a particular space in time.

French philosophers Gaston Bachelard and Henry Lefebvre present useful models for interpreting the social meaning and value of place and space. In *The Poetics of Space*, Bachelard articulates how individuals cherish specific spaces for their perceived intimacy. The spaces are important and valued by individuals first, and the individual alone determines their inherent value. This belief is not public or shared in its nature, and thus Bachelard does not ascribe



17. Coptic dipinto, Inscription 48, painted between two geometric designs on the north wall of Hermitage 4 at Esna.

to the existence of a monastic *habitus* of community. For Bachelard, spaces take on importance in one's own thoughts, memories, and dreams as they were nurtured or born within the space. The space is therefore defined by the individual and not the community, as Bourdieu and Giddens contend. Space, in Bachelard's analysis, takes on its unique importance when defined by an individual's memories of the past, experiences of the present, and hopes for the future.¹²² To return to the image of the painted walls, we may see Bachelard reading the later dipinti as acts reflecting individual agency. Instead of seeing communal identity and participation at work, Bachelard helps us see why later guests or residents may have altered walls already painted. Perhaps the value of such moments reflects the intimate significance within that single moment in time.

In his Marxist reading of space and place, Lefebvre returns our focus to how places become spaces and thus bring together the individuality espoused by Bachelard and the communality of Bourdieu and Giddens. For Lefebvre,

places are designed structures or areas that can be reproduced throughout an area such as temples, towns, and dwellings. These places then become *particular spaces* only when individuals become engaged within the space, thereby exhibiting some power over or to the space through their actions and beliefs. Lefebvre further explains that space “implies, contains and dissimulates social relationships – and this despite the fact that a space is not a thing but rather a set of relations between things (objects and products).”¹²³ For Lefebvre, space needs to be examined not as a thing itself but as the arena in which social relationships are embedded. He seeks to explain how one space is differentiated from another and asserts that spaces are determined by how they are used, perceived, acted upon, and maintained by those within spaces. Individuals are thereby the active agents responsible for transforming a *place* into a *space*.¹²⁴ Monastic space concretely exemplifies several of the theoretical interpretations of space and the community effort to create meaning around that space. For the monks of Egypt, monastic space was built to serve a diverse ascetic community. Monastics practiced a variety of asceticisms as typified by itinerant monks who wandered, monks who adopted a wide range of eremitic forms of asceticism, and monks who sought a formalized community by residing within an enclosed built environment.¹²⁵

Let’s consider an example of how monastic space could be shaped by gender in forming monastic communities. For example, Syncletica and Sarah were two female ascetics who lived in the Egyptian deserts. As Desert Mothers they stand out because they shared the same experiences as their male colleagues.¹²⁶ Yet, their presence, and that of other monastic women, was not always welcomed. Evagrius complained about “wandering women,”¹²⁷ Athanasius admonished virgins for traveling to Jerusalem,¹²⁸ and Shenoute rebuked a female leader for resisting his authority.¹²⁹ We learn that, in Middle and Upper Egypt, there were women in monasteries in villages who were associated with men’s communities.¹³⁰ Some lived under the rule of Pachomius,¹³¹ others under Shenoute’s authority in Sohag,¹³² and still others under unknown fathers throughout the Nile Valley. Palladius tells us there were at least twelve monasteries for women in Antinoë (Antinoöpolis), but we do not know anything about these women or their community since the settlement has not been fully excavated.¹³³ In many of the cases, women appear in the desert as pilgrims, monastics, and patronesses, such as Egeria,¹³⁴ Melania the Younger,¹³⁵ and Paula.¹³⁶ Few took up residency in the Egyptian desert, and male monastics worried about encounters with women as dangerous to their own asceticism, as did women when they encountered men.¹³⁷ None of the traditional occupations available to women would have required them to live alone in the deserted places of the escarpment or “outer desert.” It is rare to see any specific vocation for Egyptian women outside of household management and childrearing, although they had greater

freedoms and legal independence than their contemporaries elsewhere in the Mediterranean world.¹³⁸ With the advent of monasticism, women were able to establish somewhat independent homosocial communities – however, they were not always free of males, who sought to regulate their activities.¹³⁹

In the Egyptian archaeological record, female monastics are more elusive than in the literary evidence. Is this claim due to the fact that we do not have any archaeological evidence for women's settlements in Egypt, or that we have not yet *recognized* women in the archaeological record that we do have? To explore this question, we need to articulate what it means exactly to employ feminist theory in the interpretation of archaeological material and how it has led to gender archaeology. Gender archaeologist pioneer Alison Wylie explains the need to examine how gender bias influenced earlier archaeological work and interpretations: “[G]iven [archaeology’s] manifest failure to expose and correct sexist presuppositions, perhaps scientific method is itself androcentric; perhaps extant forms of practice do not merely allow androcentric bias to enter and persist but actually generate this bias.”¹⁴⁰ If it is the case that prior approaches were inherently androcentric, monasticism, as a form of religious life that creates homosocial communities for both genders, can benefit from an analysis of gender in relationship to material remains. Gender archaeologists, such as Roberta Gilchrist and Marie Louise Sørensen, persuasively demonstrate that male archaeologists once unconsciously hid the experiences of women by allowing for only a select group of objects to be considered signs of women's lives.¹⁴¹ Combs and mirrors, for example, are often gendered as female objects; the assumption is that they comprise a women's toilet and that men never combed their hair. Weapons and tools, in contrast, were, for generations of archaeological study, always considered identifiers for males; such an assumption precludes women from ever using weapons and tools and skews the interpretation of the finds by imparting a different set of gender norms onto the artifacts.¹⁴²

Two of the most often cited examples of women's communities in the archaeological record include a community at Saqqara, in the north, and another at Abydos, in Middle Egypt. Both sites are home to important religious monuments from Egypt's pharaonic past. When Quibell and his team recorded epigraphic evidence, including graffiti, dipinti, and funerary inscriptions, the majority of the texts addressed or praised male monks and saints. But in some cases, female monks and saints were mentioned alongside male colleagues. References to Amma Sarah, a sister to Apa Enoch, as an example, led Quibell to assert that a women's community must have been nearby, although he clearly did not believe that women were living in the areas he excavated at Saqqara.

What would have convinced Quibell that the cells he excavated were in fact the homes of women and not men? In the end, the evidence for a women's

community at Saqqara, at least based on the archaeological evidence, is very slim. The excavated ostraca from the Monastery of Apa Jeremias speak of many activities at the monastery including activities with visitors and the monastic community. Where are the women and did their community ever exist here? Could it simply be that male monastics simply revered women as role models just as they did men? The presence of Sarah alongside her brother does not necessitate the presence of a women's community. In fact, it may underscore the importance of female and male saints for male audiences. It might be worthwhile to consider how inscriptional evidence was used to ascribe the sex of inhabitants to spaces without considering what additional evidence would be needed to gender a space as male or female.

Like Saqqara, parts of the massive complex at Abydos were modified in Late Antiquity for monastic habitation. Unfortunately, very few archaeological remains exist for the monastery, which was established by Moses, a member of the White Monastery in the sixth century.¹⁴³ The men's monastery was located somewhere in or near the standing temple of Seti I. Signs that a women's community may have existed was based on a number of Coptic graffiti found on the walls of the Osireion. The graffiti references many female ascetics, in contrast to the graffiti found at the temple of Seti I, which has only male names. Walter Crum and Margaret Murray attributed the presence of this epigraphic evidence, like at the Monastery of Apa Jeremias, as proof of a woman's community at Abydos, observing: "In Coptic times the temple was used as a nunnery, and the walls were covered, in many places, with inscriptions in the characteristic red paint of the Copts."¹⁴⁴ Despite this unequivocal confidence, Crum qualifies the state of the archaeological evidence for a monastery later in the monograph writing: "[I]t is evident that most of the texts were written by or for women – male names do not occur except in the lists of saints or clerical dignitaries – they give no clear indication as to where the writers dwelt."¹⁴⁵ Recently Jennifer Westerfeld has convincingly challenged this earlier interpretation.¹⁴⁶ She argues that the inscriptional evidence is more consistent with reflecting the travel activities of women *to* the Osireion to pray and offer thanks for changes in the water levels of the Nile. Her analysis demonstrates that the presence of women's names does not necessitate the existence of a community at the site of Abydos.

What evidence, then, exists archaeologically to gender a space for a male or female monastic? Currently we do not have any substantive archaeological evidence that can be persuasively identified as the residence or community for female monastics. While we know of monasteries for women, such as those supervised by Pachomius in Upper Egypt and Shenoute in Sohag, the physical evidence is not extant.¹⁴⁷ Still, it is important to raise the question of whether the spaces for a male monastic community would appear inherently different than the spaces for female monastics. We have difficulty

identifying how individuals, regardless of gender, interacted with the spaces in which they lived. Richard Alston explains the limitations of our knowledge this way: “[W]e cannot establish ... ethnic identity of the inhabitants, the population of the house, its temporal usage, whether the pattern of occupation was gendered, the interior social relationships of the house (male-dominated/slave-master household ...), the religion of the occupants, its ownership status, its emotional hold over the occupants, its symbolic value as representatives of the inhabitants, its function in social and economic production.”¹⁴⁸ Although Alston is considering a nonmonastic, domestic settlement at the pilgrimage center of Abu Mina, his observations easily translate to a monastic setting and the question of whether we can ascertain the gender of any homosocial space. The consideration of gender, landscape, and the built residences provides little physical sign of the sex of the inhabitants. This example of gender archaeology illustrates the value in questioning perceived or inherited knowledge – the presence of female communities at Abydos and Saqqara – and the value of clarifying what physical evidence is actually needed to provide a convincing case for determining the gendered use of a particular monastic space.

The role of agency and the history of earlier interpretations are central concerns for postprocessual archaeology. Lefebvre’s explanation of how a community’s actions transforms a place, such as monastic women inscribing prayers on the walls of the Osirion, dovetails with the structuring structures of Bourdieu and Giddens in which the actions appear to happen over a series of visits to Abydos. Monastic spaces can be seen as constructed places defined by concerns for a community’s identity. On an individual level, Bachelard helps us envision the tension that likely existed between the individual and the monastic community. As we approach the textual and archaeological evidence in subsequent chapters, it will be important to consider the delicate balance between reading monastic landscapes as simultaneously individualized and communal.

Theorizing Landscape

A second area of theoretical analysis I use to analyze the monastic built environment is landscape archaeology. Christopher Tilley’s publication in 1994, *A Phenomenology of Landscape*, was a watershed publication for archaeologists in that he outlines how to link physical space together with actions and meanings not previously seen in our approach to the physical evidence. He takes the theories of individualized spaces, as discussed earlier, into a broader context that ties historical movements to space. He explains how a phenomenology of landscape looks at known evidence in a slightly different manner:

It is the phenomenologists that have most carefully theorised the distinctions between space and place, and between place and landscape,

suggesting on the one hand that space cannot exist apart from the events and activities within which it is implicated – that it derives its meaning from particular places ... and on the other, that: A landscape is a series of named locales, a set of relational places, linking by paths, movements and narratives.¹⁴⁹

The connectivity between places, access, stories, and people is important as we look more broadly at the natural environment *in addition* to the built environment. Tilley explains why:

One of our most common prejudices in landscape archaeology is to assume that the most important places in the landscape are those that have been humanly created, such as settlement sites and monuments ... We need to consider the monument or settlement in relation to others ... and with respect to its landscape context, which requires analysing its sensory affordances or constraints and the ways in which it might be experienced differently if approached from one direction rather than another ... A phenomenological study of landscape thus requires a holistic approach in which we pay as much attention to the “natural” as to the “cultural,” to places with and without evidence of human alteration or activity.¹⁵⁰

Tilley’s guide to look at the landscape’s natural and cultural elements is an essential part of reconstructing the monastic landscape, since we have seen that early perceptions of the built environment regarding the “cultural” elements as violations of the “natural” environment and early Egyptian “cultural” environments. By changing our point of view toward the landscape as a desertscape we can begin to look at the changes in Late Antiquity as part of a larger engagement with the environment than what existed in previous centuries. The challenge, of course, is to rebuild the ancient landscape from the voices, buildings, and pathways of Late Antiquity and not to ascribe modern meanings to things in the past.¹⁵¹

In addition to the assistance of landscape archaeology, cognitive archaeology, as exhibited by the work of Colin Renfrew, highlights the importance of physical archaeological markers to help us read the monastic world in ways not possible even a generation ago.¹⁵² One way to look at marking the landscape is to consider how the built environment was grafted onto and into the natural landscape. Tom Bartuska’s categorization of the ways in which communities modify the natural world, adapt to it, and foster relationships through the spaces offers a helpful typology for looking at the vast range of Late Antique monastic communities.¹⁵³ While his tripartite division is a descriptive typology, it provides a structure for the more complex theoretical reading of the material.

As agents of continuity between the ancient and medieval periods, monastics helped shape the Egyptian landscape throughout the Byzantine and Islamic

periods, rendering the materiality of monastic archaeology well suited for new theoretical readings. More recently, archaeologist Lars Fogelin has proposed a useful model for understanding how collections of spaces create either *generalized* or *specific* landscapes.¹⁵⁴ His theoretical approach, initially designed to describe his work in early Buddhist monastic archaeology, is a useful model to describe Christian monastic settlements and the tensions between idealized, or generalized, landscapes we see in hagiography, sermons, and travelogues with specific, or actualized, landscapes, which appear in the documentary record.¹⁵⁵ Fogelin defines the generalized landscape as a view of the land and the community by an elite minority. The position of privilege, such as that of archimandrites and bishops, makes it possible for elites, such as monastic authors, to shape the description of the landscape regardless of its physical form.¹⁵⁶ In contrast, *specific* landscapes are actualized landscapes – meaning they reflect the natural environment *and* the cultural environment as it actually existed.¹⁵⁷ In examining these two views of the landscape – one imagined, one physical – we can begin to reexamine monastic built environments within their actual physical and spatial contexts as correctives to the generalized landscape found in monastic sources and in modern historiography. Articulating the differences and similarities between the generalized and actualized monastic landscapes in Late Antique Egypt is the next step in shifting our perceptions away from the present and more toward the past.

Theorizing Things

The final area of theory to consider for shifting our perception of the monastic landscape is centered around things, meaning materials and ideas about materials. Materiality studies is another field of inquiry that has produced new scholarship about the archaeology of material remains and how they are shaped by individuals and communities. What does it mean to refer to materiality and not materials? The disconnection between objects and individuals is at the core of materiality studies, in which scholars seek to bring together two groups artificially separated by the impulse to create a taxonomy of things and to separate the archaeology from the field of history. Archaeologist Lynn Meskell explains that studies of materiality change interpretations of the past by urging us to look “at the object world in archaeological and ethnohistoric contexts.”¹⁵⁸ For Meskell it is essential to situate objects of the past in association with cultural relationships. The archaeology of materiality offers a broader interpretation of objects, beyond empirical reporting, thereby creating a thicker description of how materials came to be and how they were valued. The need for a more holistic reading of built space is at the heart of Kevin Fisher’s study of how built environments, nonverbal communication, and materials work together: “The location of walls and doorways enables particular patterns of

movement and encounter. Yet it is also particular masonry types, doorway widths, architectural features and artifacts that social actors mobilize in order to produce meaningful contexts for interaction.”¹⁵⁹ By placing the monastic built space at the center we can “understand particular contextual notions of the material world and its propensity to forge, shape, interpolate and possibly even challenge and undermine social relations and experiences.”¹⁶⁰ Therefore, in taking an object-centered approach to analyzing archaeological data, we move away from functional, or taxonomical, approaches to artifacts and structures on several fronts.¹⁶¹

First, materiality is not just a study of the material culture of a particular culture or historical period. The materials of the cultural setting of Egyptian monastic communities provide an opportunity to examine the monastic life of objects and how those objects, whether they be buildings, incense burners, or books, reside within a specific space, such as the monk’s residence. Second, materiality is concerned with the way the material world *acts upon* the individual and therefore has a type of agency of its own.¹⁶² For example, mud bricks are objects made of substances that are not always locally available. Therefore, the production of the bricks requires movement of individuals into regions of the Nile Valley to collect silt to be used to bind the sand, broken pottery, chaff, and limestone chips available on site in the desert areas.¹⁶³ The builders are then responding to the environmental materials, all the while being influenced by the presence or lack of raw materials for any construction. Third, materiality is not only about the classification and description of objects, but also includes an analysis of the “cultural relationships” that considers the connections between “temporality, spatiality and sociality.”¹⁶⁴ Put another way, to examine materiality is to reread how materials are shaped by social relationships through time and not just in a static period. Consider the example of wall additions to an existing building and why they were added. By reading the physical remains and the documentary evidence we learn that many relationships and events could lead to the building of a new wall as a property was divided, or the change of occupation of a building’s resident, or the damage sustained by animals knocking over a poorly constructed wall. The wall then becomes an object that reveals a variety of social expectations, legal obligations, and judicial rulings.

Owing to the wealth of written sources for monastic history, it is not surprising that the study of monasticism has contained a logocentric reading of space, whereby the discussion, as cultural geographers might express it, is based on the literary and idealized geography of space. The materiality and landscape are trapped, as it were, in the mindscape of past writers. Archaeologist Bjørnar Olsen believes that for some postprocessualists, materiality has overshadowed our perspective. He does not dismiss other theoretical approaches outright, but offers instead a corrective by demonstrating how monuments and theoretical readings, such as phenomenology

and materiality, overshadow the actual “thingly” qualities of things.¹⁶⁵ He explains a “discomfort” with current trends in archaeology and material culture studies because there is a “dominant *antimaterial* conception of culture and society” and that we have “moved away from the material qualities of things and subsumed themselves to hegemonic antimaterial and social-constructivist theories.”¹⁶⁶ For Olsen, the middle path is to find a balance between the traditional attraction to monuments, landscape, and objects, or the extraordinary things, and the overlooked mundane things.¹⁶⁷ He explains the need to reconsider how we see archaeological things:

In all our daily conduct, objects are involved as (more or less) taken-for-granted and inherent aspects of our doings. They do not just provide frames, scenes, or background for our actions, but are intrinsically and indispensably involved in enabling those very actions ... This is not to say, of course, that things are the only vital component of social order and constitute the site where all our attention from now on should be focused.¹⁶⁸

Olsen’s theoretical reading of objects is focused on materiality, but I would contend that the built environment is a “thing” on a larger scale. Buildings are often taken for granted and are seen as mere backdrops when in fact Olsen’s idea that things are “intrinsically and indispensably involved” in human actions seems highly applicable for monastic spaces. The monastic built environments were “big things” that have been overlooked by the focus on the imaginary world of monasticism found both in Late Antique literature and in modern scholarship.

A common challenge to the idea that we can discern past beliefs about things, space, and landscape is that we have few sources that easily enable us to reconstruct the relationship among the builders, residents, the land, and the built forms. Cognitive archaeologists, who espouse that we *can* find the mind of the past in the archaeological record, would disagree with their critics: “[W]e can put to one side the old split between mind and matter, beliefs and the material world that may leave traces for the archaeologist to work upon ... It is the strength of archaeology that we can actually identify the components of an underlying logic or story that makes sense of the strange.”¹⁶⁹ Olsen and other archaeologists argue that there are patterns of behaviors in how buildings are built, where they are located, the materials employed, and the signs of use within spaces that all provide evidence for creating a new perception of the monastic landscape.

CONCLUSION

In *Ideas of Landscape*, Matthew Johnson states: “If we want to take seriously the experiences of ordinary men and women in the past, the landscape

archaeology of religion is an obvious place to start.”¹⁷⁰ Collectively the spatial theories outlined earlier offer a framework for asking the quintessential question of what made a place unique and valued in monastic Egypt. The philosophical readings of space, the individual, and the community ask us to consider ways of reimagining spaces that are no longer filled with monks and the numerous individuals that participated in supporting the community through religious, social, and economic activities. The archaeological theories I introduced in this chapter provide just one framework for illustrating how to theorize the discoveries in monastic archaeology in the twentieth century.

Like Byzantine archaeology, monastic archaeology in Egypt was only marginally affected by profound theoretical and methodological changes in the field of archaeology after the 1960s. In tracing the history of archaeological work and publication efforts since 1914, we can see that the field of Coptic archaeology did emerge by the 1970s. Owing to the field’s struggle to assert its identity separate from Egyptology and to stand on its own merits, Coptic archaeology could not participate in the revolutionary ideas of processualism or postprocessualism. Fortunately, with the increasing interest in Byzantine archaeology and in viewing Coptic material as part of the larger Byzantine world, a new archaeological reconstruction of the Late Antique monastic landscape is possible.

THREE

AN ECOHISTORY AND GEOHISTORY OF THE EGYPTIAN LANDSCAPE

FOR SOME OBSERVERS, THE DESERT'S SILENCE EVOKED A SACREDNESS THAT other locales could not. The desert is the place where one encounters the divine. Moses received the Ten Commandments; Jesus found solitude in the desert before beginning his ministry; and Muhammad received his first revelation in a cave in the desert escarpment of Mount Hira. Archaeologist Arthur Weigall, writing in 1911 for *Blackwood's Magazine*, underscored the importance of the Egyptian desert as a space for such encounters when he described the discovery of an unknown Coptic ruin in the Eastern Desert: "A dramatic residence, indeed, for a man of God and for his followers! Here, in the splendid desolation of this valley amongst the hills, one could well imagine an anchorite turning his thoughts to things beyond ... There is an atmosphere of expectancy in these desert canons, a feeling that something lies waiting around the corner, a sense of elusiveness inviting a search, a mysterious suggestion of an impending event."¹ The "desolation" of the wadi provided the stage Weigall needed for imagining the behaviors and religious activities of ancient Christians. He envisioned an anchorite piously living his life and actively distancing himself from the tentacles of the urban setting. Here in the desert the mysterious and elusive became more obvious to a viewer such as Weigall. He was equally overwhelmed with an assumed sacrality of the land and his own belief that only here could one encounter God. He, like other viewers of monastic ruins, was not able to consider the archaeological evidence without conjuring wonder-working saints living in the desert.

This chapter moves away from the twentieth-century perceptions of the monastic landscape to the physical landscape of Late Antique Egypt. I do not focus on the numerous agricultural fields monasteries owned as part of their estates, but rather on the larger landscape of Egypt, the factors affecting the environment, and the available resources for new constructions that monastic communities could employ. A large number of settlements are located on the fringes of the cultivation. By utilizing reading strategies from ecohistory, landscape studies, and materiality, I offer a reorientation of the perception of the physical landscape to assist us in seeing the land in Late Antique terms.² A brief history of building codes in Late Antiquity provides a chronological framework for the rise of monastic settlements and gives a historical basis for subsequent discussions. The chapter then returns to the theoretical frameworks of landscape to help contextualize the Late Antique environment.

THE PHYSICAL LANDSCAPE

In many ways, Weigall's view of the monastic space differed little from that of the first Christian tourists in the fourth to sixth centuries who made journeys to the desert to see the holy role models (see Fig. 18).³ When Athanasius described how the Nile Valley had changed with the popularity of Antony's relocation to the desert, he stated, "[T]he desert was made a city by monks."⁴ Similarly, the author of the *History of the Monks in Egypt* could describe the vast numbers only by stating: "There are as many monks in the desert as there are laymen in the rest of the world."⁵ The ubiquitous movement of men into the monasteries was an essential component of a religious geography in Egypt and it was understood within Christian literature as a land that could fundamentally change those who resided within.⁶

Reading accounts of the Egyptian landscape in early monastic literature provides scholars with a taxonomy of place that shapes how many scholars have interpreted where monastics lived.⁷ The vivid ascetic portraits of John of Lycopolis entombed on a cliff for decades in Middle Egypt or Macarius of Alexandria living alone in the remote desert like a hyena make for good stories. The accounts were and are evocative of monastic space. They capture the imagination of audiences. Their stories exhibit a life of hardship and commitment – so great were these early desert inhabitants that they were willing to subject their bodies to the harshness of the natural environment. The Egyptian mountain cliffs and deserts were elevated as spaces conducive to spiritual living, for they were the antithesis of the urban or inhabited world. The monastic desert was a space that communicated religious ideals while interweaving religious geography with spiritual progress.⁸ Yet, the challenge in considering how Egyptian monastic landscape was understood in antiquity is not shaped solely by access to material or textual evidence; rather,



18. The Inner Desert of Egypt in Upper Egypt with modern pilgrims making a journey to a monastic cave.

the interpreter shapes the artifacts, buildings, and documents by his or her interpretations. Even by the 1960s and 1970s, Egypt's monastic sites were still viewed as unimportant and difficult to navigate because of the reinforced view by ancient and modern authors that monks lived in a harsh and spartan world.

A specific example of the monastic desert as an idealized and exclusive landscape is Sketis, the famous Great Desert of the Desert Fathers. It illustrates how physical descriptions of the desert in turn created and reinforced monastic social beliefs about a place and its relationship to the desert. The imagined or mythologized desert of Sketis is a prominent character in the literature of fourth-, fifth-, and sixth-century authors, who significantly shaped how later scholars then interpreted the history of the built environment in Sketis. Stories of the great Egyptian desert traveled to monks in Gaza and went farther still in the words of monastic visitors such as Palladius, John Cassian, and Jerome.⁹ Their accounts elevated a particular type of landscape, or *generalized landscape*, which reflects the ideals and objectives of a privileged elite minority who

helped craft the mythologized Egyptian monastic desert.¹⁰ The production of the generalized landscape blossoms under their care as elites were responsible for the writing, patronage, execution, and planning of the idealized landscape. Subsequent generations then reinforce the idealized landscape almost unconsciously as they participate in a *monastic habitus*, whereby a community adopts structuralizing narratives to enhance its identity. The problem is that this landscape is at odds with the *actualized landscape* or the lived experience found in the documentary and archaeological sources of the fifth to ninth centuries. By considering the physical landscape we can distill the myth from the reality and better appreciate the actual Late Antique, monastic landscape.

The Nile, as Herodotus once claimed, was Egypt's gift. It and its canals provide much-needed water for the agricultural fields. It also provides practical and easy transport throughout the country, by alleviating the difficulties of land travel along arid desert paths (see Fig. 19).¹¹ The regularity of the flooding of the Nile provided stability that fostered positive agricultural yields, and when the Nile departed from this pattern, it spread alarm through all communities.¹² The Nile along with the arable land that hugs its banks and the desert that rises from the flood plains create a tripartite landscape, which is uniquely Egyptian.¹³ The river's inundation creates a seasonal agricultural landscape, and both are sheltered and limited by Egypt's nearby desert cliffs. As a riverine culture, Egypt is a very important alluvial environment whose archaeological record is shaped by the presence of floodplains.¹⁴ The interaction between the arid desert as it abuts the floodplains is important to consider, since the dichotomous landscape creates very specific environmental conditions that impacted the locations of villages, burial centers, and forms of transportation. In the Western Desert, several oases dot the plateau of the "outer desert." Excavations at several oases such as Bahariya, Dakhlah, Farafa, Kharja, Siwa, and the Fayyum illustrate how roadways effectively connected these sites with the Nile Valley.¹⁵ Only a few monastic communities were located at the oases. Given the higher percentage of known monastic settlements along the Nile Valley and in the Delta, it appears monastics did not seek out the more distant oases as locations for their communities. Was this due to environmental concerns or other factors?¹⁶ Why did monastics occupy and settle the land and how did they understand the concept of the desert?

THE MONASTIC DESERTSCAPE

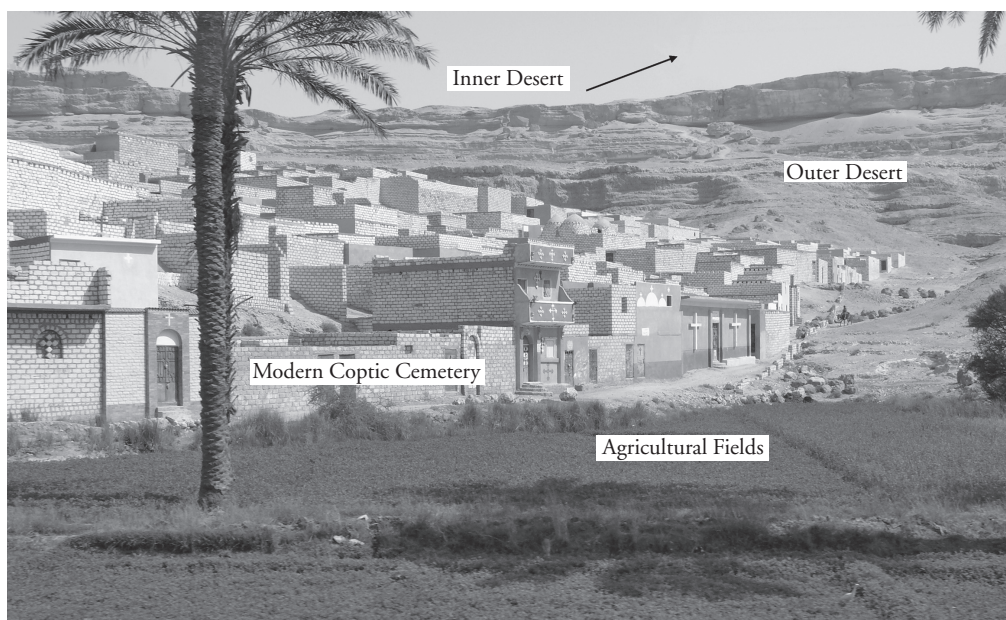
The Egyptian desert in its mystical expansiveness and its diversity was the largest area employed by builders for monastic settlements. The desert was the "other" landscape and stood in close juxtaposition to the realm of the inhabited world (Coptic/Gk. *oikoumenē*) that held the city (Coptic *baki*; Gk. *polis*), the village (Coptic *time*; Gk. *kōmē*), and the agricultural fields (Coptic *eišhe*; Gk.



19. The Nile, its banks, and the desert near Aswan in southern Egypt.

geōrgion) (see Fig. 20). The urban landscape as the antithesis of the desertscape, with all its distinctive features, was a center for entangling relationships, obligations, and possessions.¹⁷ The dangers of the city, enveloped in human forms rather than demonic ones, were based in social obligations that existed because of familial ties.¹⁸ While the Greek *Life of Antony* presents monastic movements into the desert as a form of monastic civilizing of the desert, the later Coptic and Syriac redactions of the *Life* are more circumspect in describing the settlement of the desert. Rather than invoking a monastic *polis* in the desert, the Coptic and Syriac texts identify the ascetics as occupiers: “[I]n this way monastic dwellings (*monastērion*) came into being in the mountains and the desert filled with monks and they lived there, having left their homes.”¹⁹ The Coptic version makes the separation between urban living and monastic living clearly distinct to communicate the differences between the two spheres.

The dangers of the desert were tied to the very *physicality* of the desertscape.²⁰ It was radically different from the city or village. The desert held endless sand (Coptic *šo*; Gk. *ammos*), natural caves (Coptic *bēb*; Gk. *spelaiōn*), mountains (Coptic *toou*; Gk. *oros*), ravines (*eia*; Ar. *wadi*), man-made stone quarries (Coptic *ōne* or *petra*; Gk. *lithos* or *petra*), and tombs (Coptic *mhaau*; Gk. *mnema*)



20. The Egyptian landscape in Middle Egypt showing the movement from the agricultural fields, the Outer Desert, and the plateau to the Inner Desert, which is beyond the visible landscape.

(see Figs. 21 and 22). Owing to the number of activities that would bring laborers and soldiers into the escarpment and its wadis, the desert hosted numerous and frequent encounters between the world and monastic communities.²¹ Men bringing wine on camels, quarrymen going into the hills to extract stone, soldiers at military outposts, and visitors to holy places all found pathways leading to monastic built environments that were very visible from the fields below. This was the Outer Desert (*plēsīn erēmos*), the area closest to the inhabited and agricultural lands.

Beyond the Outer Desert lay the Inner Desert (*makrotera erēmos*), which was visually and physically separated from the Nile Valley below (see Fig. 23).²² In order to find the monks living at these sites, one needed to literally journey into the deepest desert. The dwellings in the Inner Desert were not visible either from the escarpment or the terraced lands below. The difference between the inner and outer desert is important to notice, as the Outer Desert is close, visible, and a physical landscape, whereas the Inner Desert is beyond, mysterious, and much vaster than the Outer Desert. The Outer Desert was part of the inhabited world. It was not the remote, Inner Desert, but part of dynamic tripartite landscape. The physical proximity is evident in an early twentieth-century excavation photo of Medient Habu, the mortuary complex for Ramesses III, in Thebes. The numerous mud brick buildings that dominate the image are the remains of the famous Late Antique city of Jeme. Beyond the perimeter wall of Medinet Habu are the



21. The entrance to a small monastic residence in a natural cave in the Inner Desert near Sohag, Egypt.

cliffs and wadis of the Outer Desert, which was reclaimed for domestic habitation and monastic communities. The enormously rich documentary evidence from Jeme and the letters in small archives of monastic communities point to numerous stories of daily travel, visits, and economic exchanges between monastics and nonmonastics (see Fig. 24).²³

The physical desert in Coptic is expressed most often by the noun *daie* (Gk. *eremos*) and by a verb meaning “to destroy or devastate” (Coptic *šōf*).²⁴ *Daeie* can be used for the physical location of the desert or to convey the sense of making some place “into a desert” or “to be deserted.”²⁵ Both usages help us understand monastic perceptions of the desert. First, *daie* could carry a metaphorical sense in which any place, including a physical desert, could become “deserted.” In *P.Mon.Epiph* 162, a monk named Joseph laments that he must find a new monastic dwelling or live in a *deserted* place, and here the author uses *daie* to convey the *condition* of the space as uninhabited.²⁶ Those living in the cultivated or urban areas may have regarded the “deserted places” as not suitable for living, but monastic communities saw the opportunity to establish new settlements free from complex legal obligations to landowners and landlords.



22. Quarried area at the site of Dayr al-Dik in Middle Egypt. Inhabitants of the space on the right cut a door, windows, and sockets for a wood frame for both.

Regardless of where monks settled, they could and did find themselves in areas where they experienced many divine encounters. An ostrakon from Thebes reminds a monk to be faithful in order to be blessed by the “angel of the desert place,” thereby illustrating that “deserted places” were conduits for spiritual encounters.²⁷ Furthermore, in monastic literature a desert could be linked to a founding monk and become part of the appellation for the area. For instance, in the tenth-century Coptic *Life* of John Khame, we read of Wadi al-Natrun as the “Desert of our father Abba Makarius.”²⁸ In these examples the desert is not imbued with any negative value, but instead describes the physical reality of the space. The shift in usage occurs when an area could “become a desert” place (Coptic *mardaie*). For example, if monks did not abide by the monastic rules and tell a leader, such as Shenoute, of violations within the community, he warned that the monastery could become deserted. Individuals would be forced to leave the community because of their abusive behavior, making the monastery uninhabited.²⁹ Shenoute’s usage reflects a pattern of housing falling into disuse and outright abandonment. In Middle Egypt, it was exactly these types of “deserted” structures that Pachomius would use to establish his monasteries.³⁰

References to the literal, physical desertscape, *daie*, appear throughout monastic literature. For example, in Stephen’s *Panegyric on Apollo*, *daie*, as a variant of



23. Inner Desert visible from the crest of a ridge of the Outer Desert on the West Bank west of the Shenoute's White Monastery in Sohag, Egypt.

daeie, is used to describe the physical *place* of the desert that was near where Apa Apollo lived.³¹ Janet Timbe explains how Shenoute used the desert, *daeie*, in a broader geographical sense in *Canon 3*: “The desert, in fact is the *domain* of Shenoute, comprising several sites. Shenoute described his domain in this way: ‘Our territory (Copitc *penkōte*) is from the ravine (Copitc *eia*) which is north of the village of Atripe up to the ravine south of our venerable father Apa Pshoi, the place where he first lived in the desert (*daeie*).’”³² Physical markers such as ravines and older dwellings become benchmarks in the landscape, providing visual boundaries that could be seen from far distances. Shenoute uses the “desert of our domain” as a way to encompass the collective area, and thus the desert is under monastic authority.³³ The monastic desert therefore is one that is shaped by authority over the desert and by occupation of the desert and how features are named. This example illustrates Christopher Tilley’s landscape in which markers, modes of movement, and named spaces work in unison to create a place that is more than its physical geology and topography.

By moving into the outskirts of town, to the Outer Desert, monastics demonstrated through their actions that the built form could impart new meaning to underutilized places. Their building activities illustrate Lefebvre’s notion



24. Mud brick buildings of Jeme north of the Great Temple of Medinet Habu before excavation, Thebes, Egypt.

that social space is built through a community's belief about a space. The Outer Desert was closer to nonmonastic communities. The Inner Desert lay far beyond the visible escarpment. Few monks ventured in this space as it was even more dangerous and marginal than the near desert. They built monastic settlements on the boundary of the inhabited land as a visible sign that monks could extend the line of civilization. Beyond these settlements in the Inner Desert, monks lived on very little and were said to find companionship only with God. Because of their utter dependence on God, they did not have clothes, possessions, or even a residence.

DETAILS OF THE LANDSCAPE

Egypt's limestone and shale cliffs often abruptly rise from the agricultural basin and frame the Nile, from Aswan in the south to the Delta in the north.³⁴ The contrast between the yellow and tan hills of the limestone cliffs and the green agricultural fields in the valley below provides a visible boundary between the two areas, diminishing any transitional area between the two locations

(see Fig. 19).³⁵ The construction of the Aswan Dam in 1969 and the use of modern hydraulic systems have permanently transformed Egypt's landscape.³⁶ It is important to remember that the percentage of arable land has increased and altered the relative perceived distances between archaeological sites, the Nile, and the desert. David Jeffreys explains:

One of the standard models of geographical analysis and spatial distribution, that of core and periphery, presents obvious difficulties ... with its ribbon-like presentation and the low-density or (supposedly) uninhabited desert regions bounding 90 percent of the high-density inhabited area (the 230 km of deltaic Mediterranean coastline being the 10 percent exception), the "peripheries" are evidently different from those in most other ancient polities, and even the relationships between settlement nodes in the Nile Valley can be expected not to conform to any expectation of a "central-place" norm.³⁷

The settlement patterns therefore developed in response to Egypt's unique topography and geophysical features, thus creating unique challenges and choices for Egyptian builders, including monks, who established new residences outside of traditional urban environments.

Environmental factors such as wind, sand accumulation, and heat all create practical concerns for builders. The placement of doors, the height of windows, the length of built-in sleeping benches, and the alignment of ventilation shafts could all be shaped by such factors. For example, Ewa Wipszycka asks an essential question about the emplacement of the buildings at the 103-hectare Monastery of Apa Apollo at Bawit. In considering the results of Tomasz Herbich's geophysical survey, she notes that the density of the monastic settlement is located more in the north of the mound than in the south. For Wipszycka, the density of the housing in the north reflects a conscious effort by the builders to limit desert sand accumulating at the residences.³⁸ Therefore, the site's design reflects an intimate knowledge of the landscape and seasons. Wipszycka considers not only religious motivations for spatial configuration but also the environmental concerns that come with building a city in the desert versus in the cultivated land, where windblown sand is not as much of a concern in house construction. For Wipszycka, it is important to consider the geographical setting of monastic settlements, as it provides a unique set of challenges for how monks adapted their buildings to the natural environment.³⁹

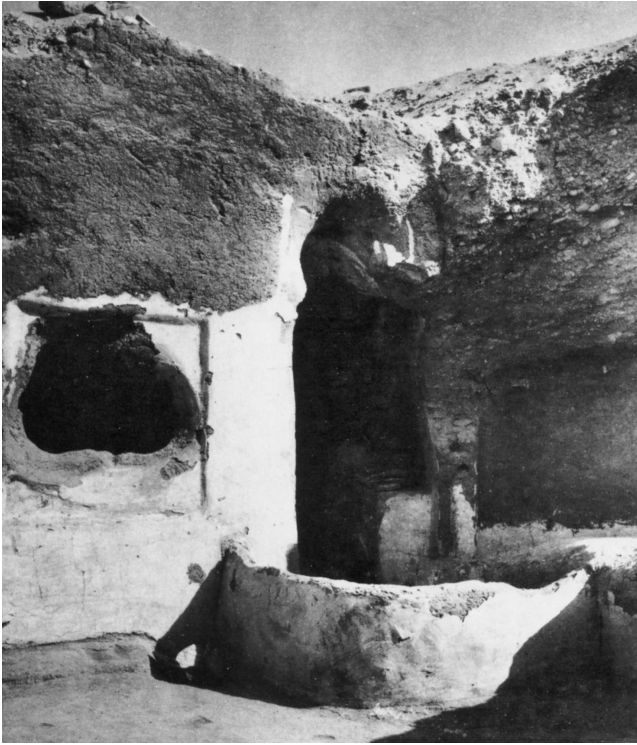
The greatest threat to monasteries was not the numerous desert neighbors or travelers over the years, but the relationship with the environment. In particular, they needed to account for two central factors: the arid, hot climate and the power of the *khamsin*, or spring sandstorms. Together, these two natural forces could undo the man-made structures. Fine granules of sand slowly eroded plaster surfaces, collected in doorways, and filled in abandoned

courtyards.⁴⁰ With just a momentary rain, followed by intense heat, the structures began to evolve back into their original forms before construction. Lasting only a few days at most, the 56–75-kilometer-per-hour winds deposit significant amounts of fine sand and sediment.⁴¹ Many sites are literally hidden by the environment in a very short amount of time. The only indication of the presence of a structure may be a slight rise from the desert plain, more visible in the early morning hours and completely unremarkable in the heat of midday. Other buildings nestled on the escarpments, quarries, tombs, and caves started to blend in with the natural materials. It was not intentional that the monasteries became lost to us.

The intentionality of construction to meet the needs of the resident and the challenges of the environment are apparent at several sites. At Naqlun, in the Fayyum, the monastic dwellings have a spatial configuration that allows for early-morning and midday light to come into the large communal areas on the south side of the complex. Low afternoon indirect light is given to the dwelling areas on the north side of the complex as well as a kitchen.⁴² A similar feature exists in the dwellings at Esna in which the residences are carved down into the desert plain. Steeply sloping windowsills extend downward, almost to the floor, to provide the widest area for light to reflect into the dwelling.⁴³ Windows often align with ventilation shafts on opposite walls to allow for air-flow through rooms as seen at the dwellings in Wadi al-Natrun and at Kellia.⁴⁴ The arid climate and the intensity of the heat in the summer months in Egypt would require that dwellings have thick walls to retain the cool from the desert evenings. At Esna we see the use of short walls in front of doorways to prevent wind-blown sand from entering the rooms (see Fig. 25).⁴⁵ This feature is particularly important, as the open courtyards are sunk into the desert floor, and thus the depressions would naturally accumulate significant amounts of drift sand compared to buildings that were built level with the rest of the desert plain.

In addition to considering environmental factors such as wind, sand, and light, monastic builders were acutely aware of the need to have a readily available source of water. Monks needed water first for building, as it was a key component in the making of mud bricks, mud mortar to hold the bricks, and in the mixing of plaster that sealed the wall surfaces. Other building projects required water for making *opus signinum*, a dense plaster that is found on the walls of many cisterns and wells.⁴⁶ For the health of the community, water reservoirs and access to fresh water were essential. It is the importance of this natural resource that helps explain the theme of miraculous water sources in monastic literature. It is not surprising to read of several accounts of provisions of water for monks, who later build cisterns or wells to provide for themselves or their community.

In the Sahidic Coptic *Life of Antony*, we are told of a miracle when Antony was asked by his fellow monks to come down from his dwelling to theirs to



25. Sand barrier made of mud bricks before the entrance to Hermitage 5 at Esna.

teach them. A group of monks gather together to trek up to Antony's residence, but the trip quickly becomes difficult:

They had a camel to carry bread for them and water, for there is no water in that desert except on the mountain where Antony's monastic cell was, and there they drew water for the journey. When they ran out of water on the road, a terrible scorching heat threatened to kill all of them. Despite going around everywhere there, they found no water to drink and were unable to walk at all but instead fell on the ground; they let the camel go its own way because they had given up completely. But when the old man saw them in such danger, he sighed deeply and, moving a short distance from them, he knelt on the ground and prayed, and immediately the Lord caused water to come out of the place where he was praying.⁴⁷

Both Antony and the community had their own water supply, but they were soon in danger when the water ran out on the journey between the two locations. Antony's miracle is God's provision of water in the desert. Similarly, John the Little acquires more virtue for a similar discovery of water. The *Life* tells how the increase in John's followers necessitated the need for a more regular source of water. The brothers were busy transporting water by foot when John

realized it was time to dig a well to alleviate the brothers from the burden of the daily acquisition of water. The excavation of the well took five days, and still no water appeared. On the last night, John spent the night praying at the well. By morning the community had “a sweet spring of water.”⁴⁸ John, as the founder for the community, further solidified his virtuous life in God’s response to the monk’s prayers. The community’s identity was now linked permanently to the miracle of the well and to John’s prayers.

In smaller communities, access to water was not as easily solved with the digging of a well. Palladius, for example, admits to the difficulty of living with the independent Dorotheus in his cave when he writes: “I left Dorotheus before the three years were up for living with him one got parched and all dried up.”⁴⁹ Since Dorotheus relied on the collection and transport of water to his dwelling, Palladius found this to be less than ideal for his idea of asceticism. In the *Life of Shenoute* we learn of how a great well was miraculously stabilized by Shenoute during a construction disaster. The story provides the origins for a palm tree and explains the great stability of the well, despite its near-collapse:

At one time they were working in the well which was being dug in the monastery, and the brothers were working there when the devil laid a trap for them: by his will, [the well] fell in on the laborers who were working there. One of the brothers who had been involved in the digging ran and told our father Apa Shenoute. He arose, took his palm-branch, and went down to the well; he reached out with his palm-branch and drove it into the wall of the well. It immediately took root and sent up palm-branches and palm-leaves, and the men who were working ate its fruit. From that day to this, the well has never moved again.⁵⁰

The water from this well, which still exists today at the White Monastery, spread to a variety of buildings at the monastery through a complex system of ceramic piping, inspection tanks, and water sluices.⁵¹ Throughout this monastery and most monastic sites, the ability to contain and control water for drinking and for daily work, such as the weaving of baskets or making rope, was essential. Thus, builders designed cisterns, dug wells, and plastered all these features with a thick lime mortar, *opus signinum*, that served as a waterproofing layer. Large water tanks were also built in the Delta at the Monastery of Apa Jeremias.⁵²

The importance of water for a settlement’s location is vital to any community, regardless of its particular identity. The miraculous discovery of water provides a *raison d’être* for the community to be located where it is. The monastic narratives place the discovery of water as the final confirmation that the communities should be situated where they are, but in reality they could not have existed in such locations without the presence of water in the first place. In the end, the construction of a well or discovery of a spring confirms that the monks should indeed live in a particular location.

Egypt's natural environment had many dangers that made monastic living a challenge. Sometimes the threats came not from forces of nature, but from the environment's residents, who were displaced from their natural habitat. Animals, demons, and the dead all shared the desertscape with the monks. Snakes, scorpions, gazelles, crocodiles, hyenas, and rodents were equally at home in late antique Egypt.⁵³ The *History of the Monks in Egypt* recounts a vivid story of a village plagued by a large snake that was killing livestock. The villagers went to Amoun, who lived on the edge of the village, in the near desert. The monk tracked down the egregious animal and confronted him by saying that Christ would destroy him: "As soon as [Amoun] said this, the serpent burst and vomited through its mouth all its poison mixed with blood."⁵⁴ Wild animals appear in Athanasius's account of Antony's dwelling: "At first wild animals in the desert coming for water often would damage the beds in his garden. But he caught one of the animals, held it gently, and said to them all: 'Why do you do harm to me when I harm none of you? Go away, and in the Lord's name do not come near these things again!'"⁵⁵ The ability to tame wild animals or to destroy dangerous ones appears repeatedly in monastic literature. Although the purpose of these stories is to teach lessons about the saint's holiness and faithfulness, the animals presented are representative of those found within the Egyptian context and often appear as actors in the stories of saints.⁵⁶

Monastic literature, more so than documentary evidence, addresses the presence of pesky creatures such as mosquitoes, scorpions, and snakes. Coptic magical spells frequently included techniques for protection against scorpions, snakes, and crocodiles.⁵⁷ A fourth-century spell reads: "Preserve this house with its occupants from all evil, and terrible pain [and] sting of scorpion and snake."⁵⁸ Spells against these animals have continuity from earlier pharaonic spells to protect homes and individuals from dangers.⁵⁹ Mosquitoes are known for thriving in areas with standing water. The marshes and salt lakes around Wadi al-Natrun provide ample ground for mosquitoes to thrive. Macarius of Alexandria apparently was human enough to detest mosquitoes and killed one after it had bitten him. As a form of penance for his violent act of killing the mosquito he elected to expose himself entirely to mosquitoes for six months. Sitting naked in the "great desert" of Wadi al-Natrun, Macarius suffered so many bites and swellings that according to Palladius he was unrecognizable until he spoke.⁶⁰ Sometimes the animals of the desert would harm monks, and animals that could kill could not be tolerated. Although Macarius rebuked himself for killing a mosquito, he considered the shredding of an asp, which tried to bite him, appropriate, since God had not sent the creature to him. Monks such as Macarius represent the tension that existed between some creatures and monks.

Some animals facilitated peace between the natural world and monastic communities; other creatures appeared as vehicles for the devil to discourage

monks from living in the desert. Snakes, scorpions, and mosquitoes make appearances in the texts as God-provided reminders to monks to abide by their ascetic goals.⁶¹ For example, Shenoute uses the act of killing a snake to teach his monastic communities how to rout out sin in one's life.⁶² He offers very practical advice as to how one coped when snakes appear in crevices and in holes around one's dwelling. When one knows a snake is within, Shenoute explains that you keep a light burning until you can use a spear to kill the creatures. Once dead, the carcass should be removed from one's home.

Less present, but clearly evident in the archaeological record, is the role of insects. Eva Panagiotakopulu's study of the archaeoentomological work on mummies from pharaonic Egypt and in other archaeological contexts illustrates that Egyptians lived with infestations of bed bugs, lice, and weevils.⁶³ Burials of human and animal mummies also illustrate the many bugs found easy fodder within the tombs, and thus the mummies became home to a variety of insects. Although little work has been carried out on monastic burials to look at the impact of insects on monastic individuals, evidence from the Byzantine site of Kom al-Nana at Amarna suggests that the community had several infestations of insects related to food and storage.⁶⁴ There is also a presence of more bugs that would be associated with a site with greater proximity to water or water storage than what might be suggested by the extremely arid environment of Kom el-Nana today. The fact that the landscape today suggests a somewhat arid and agriculture-free environment does not mean that communities did not create gardens, pools, and complex water storage systems to allow them to have the food they needed farther away from the agricultural fields.

While the documentary evidence may not contain many complaints of infestations or reports of near-misses with wild animals, monastic literature in fact offers several tales of encounters and victories over animals and insects. Some monasteries in the medieval period were abandoned due to some kind of insect infestations that ate the wood of the monastery, causing the very structure to collapse. The accounts may have some basis in lived experiences with daily nuisances. The accounts of monastic encounters with animals and insects do not indicate that the monastic communities were experiencing anything unusual in daily living. In fact, they were recounting typical experiences that many Egyptians faced, especially those who lived and worked on the fringes of the cultivated fields.

Monastic communities planned for the care of their domesticated animals and designed protections against wild animals. Financial accounts from the documentary evidence of several monastic sites report on the number of animals kept within monastic communities. Housing animals would require space and simple structures for holding fodder, tethering animals, and the collection of dung. Domesticated animals served many functions. They provided milk, meat, clothing, fuel, and transportation of goods and people.⁶⁵ Several papyri

and ostraca record the sale of animals between monastic and village members. *PBalz* 119 records how Peilitheos agreed to a price of one solidus for the sale of his ass and foal to Abraham, a resident at the monastery of Apa Mena.⁶⁶ Account lists of goods also provide details for reconstructing the presence of animals in monasteries. *PBalz*. 332 lists a variety of animal skins (ox, goat, and sheep) that were either traded to or out of the monastery.⁶⁷ At the Monastery of Apa Jeremias, camels appear in several texts. They were used for transport as attested in the documentary evidence and with the discovery of two camel saddles.⁶⁸ Several ostraca describe the receiving or loading of camels for transport. Rooms with animal dung and pens for fodder led Quibell to identify some sites for animal husbandry within the monastery at Saqqara. And a few monks are given titles that demonstrate they are in charge of the dung, meaning they were working with animals and might be making dung patties for fuel for the various kitchens at the monastery.⁶⁹ Domesticated animals therefore were an essential part of monastic life, and regardless of how many a community had, part of its built environment would have features designed for the care of these animals.

MATERIALS FOR BUILDING

Only two-thirds of Egypt's monastic settlements were built entirely from the ground up. A third of the settlements were modifications of previously existing shelters, either natural formations or man-made, such as abandoned homes, tombs, or quarries. The use of tombs for monastic dwelling has generated some interest in how monastics viewed the ancient sacred landscape and whether it had spiritual power that monks sought to dominate. While death and tombs surface in monastic literature, they are not prevalent themes within monastic discussions of their built environments. A few examples illustrate how dwelling in tombs was used only for temporary shelter for monks and indicate that tombs were repurposed for monastic living. Macarius the Great once went to Terenuthis and entered a tomb that still had corpses within in order to take a rest. The bodies are identified as "pagan," but they are not a threat to Macarius. His real enemies are the demons who are living in the tomb. To exhibit his indifference to them, Macarius lies down using a pagan body as a pillow. The demons try to scare Macarius, and he demonstrates he is not tricked by their attempts to make him afraid of the corpses by knocking on the body.⁷⁰ The Coptic *Sayings of Macarius* includes a second account involving a tomb.⁷¹ This time Macarius takes up permanent residence in a tomb for three years. There is a male corpse within, and on Macarius's decision to leave the tomb for a new residence, the deceased blocked the doorway, apparently making himself known to the saint for the first time. The man states that he cannot allow Macarius to leave because the saint's presence has alleviated the man of

his suffering. Then a voice states that the man was blessed because otherwise Macarius would not have taken residence in the man's tomb. The deceased, unlike in the earlier example, can now speak and is blessed, not cursed, by the time Macarius has spent within the tomb.

In other instances, monastics are encouraged by their teachers to go to the tombs to throw stones at the dead or to wait for the dead to praise them. The lesson is that the monks should become indifferent to praise and scorn just as the dead are unresponsive: "[I]f you wish to be saved, be dead, take no account of people's scorn or their compliments, like the dead themselves, and you can be saved."⁷² It may be this indifference, if we can locate the social relationships monks had to the tombs, that allowed monks to easily move into mortuary topography. While later Egyptologists and archaeologists viewed the tombs as clearly pagan grounds, it is difficult to maintain that monks were so disturbed by the tombs and their pagan representations. As we will see in Chapter 4, monastics often viewed their repurposed tombs as caves, akin to both natural caves and the long-abandoned quarries.

There are cases of defacement at a variety of tombs, but they are selective and not thorough. In many cases tombs are altered by the application of white plaster, which in turn helped seal and protect the vibrant pharaonic colors beneath.⁷³ If we consider the spatial proximity of the near (outer) desert, with its already preexisting features and the monastic belief that they were establishing a holy place, a *topos*, it seems very logical that monks would elect to reclaim the desert of its wild animals and the dead. By doing so, they extended the boundaries of the cultivated and inhabited land further than it had been before.

In the late fourth century, Abba Pijimi told a story about Abba Macarius and the building of cells in Sketis. Two men approached the great Macarius, not knowing he was the man they sought to study with, and asked to see Macarius. After identifying himself as the man they wished to study with, Macarius set up a test for the men, telling them directly that he suspected they were not prepared for the demands of monastic living. He posed a challenge to them to build their own cells and see how they would fare in desert living. The fourth-century Coptic *Sayings of Macarius of Egypt* contains a brief story that is rich in its description of building methods. Macarius reports: "I gave them a pick-axe and a spade and a bag with bread and salt. I showed them the rock of an abandoned quarry and said them, 'Cut yourselves a place here and bring some wood for yourselves from the wadi, make a roof, and thus you can live here.'"⁷⁴ They needed practical food goods to help sustain them for the work: salt to cope with dehydration and bread that would not spoil in the heat. Although they were in the low-lying desert, Macarius directed them to an abandoned quarry to build their home.



26. View of a quarry region at Dayr al-Dik in Middle Egypt.

Macarius's challenge to the two men was, in fact, not unusual or remarkable. For generations, teams of workmen had cut and carved into Egypt's escarpments as they quarried for gypsum, basalt, chert, and limestone from the predynastic period well into Roman times (see Fig. 26). The human manipulation of the geological strata produced impressive spaces sufficient for habitation for the laborers and on-site workshops for stone carvers.⁷⁵ Research by geologists and archaeologists in the environmental history of Egypt's premodern mining illustrates how many settlements once existed on the fringes. The quarry camps and work sites have always existed from Neolithic times to the present, as Elizabeth Bloxam has argued.⁷⁶ But because the sites lack monumental structures and signs of complex built environments, the history of the landscape was undervalued, and, by association, so were the settlements of those who worked in the cliffs. In many cases the quarrymen had a long history of living and working on the periphery and left inscriptions along routes and caves, but because of their remote nature, their history, undocumented in traditional sources, became invisible.⁷⁷ Therefore, it is not surprising that on reading of monks going into deserts to reuse tombs, quarries, or caves, historians found the relocation unusual and remarkable, if not entirely foreign.

A similar argument might also be made for loss of context in analyzing natural caves or man-made quarries that were altered for long-term habitation. Take, for example, a set of rooms located at the site of Dayr al-Bala'yzah and built against the cliffs (see Fig. 27).⁷⁸ Now significantly weathered by its location on a cliff and unprotected by any limestone plaster, the residence bears no signs of who resided here. The buildings, however, still preserve some plaster with scant traces of red *dipinti*, some written in Coptic, and then others in Arabic. Who then resided here? The most obvious answer



27. Mud brick buildings at the monastic settlement of Dayr al-Bala'yazah in Middle Egypt.

would be monastics, but why? How does the materiality of the monastic space lead one to make this conclusion? This space, like other structures in the desert, becomes monastic space based on circumstantial evidence including the use of dipinti, pottery, and evidence of occupation. The interpretative assumption is that given the landscape and topography, the only individuals who would reside here would be monastics. To raise this question is to demonstrate Lynn Meskell's challenge to question how "we have become accustomed to viewing unproblematically" objects of the past and "residing in intransigent taxonomies."⁷⁹ One area to examine further is the accessibility of materials for making and remodeling the landscape.

Mud is easily acquired from the cultivated areas of the Nile Valley.⁸⁰ The stories of monks building a cell in a day are not necessarily far-fetched, as a dwelling can be constructed rather quickly with a wooden brick mold, mud, and sunshine (see Fig. 28). Once the bricks are sufficiently dried, construction can begin. Walls for a monastic residence were built directly against the rock, and part of the natural topography lends strength to the shape of the rooms. At Abu al-Nasr mud brick structures are integrated into the natural landscape. In other areas of Abu al-Nasr, "a ridge of natural rock was carved into two rectangular blocks and a mud-brick wall abutted to the southern face,



28. Mud brick walls and mud mortar from the monastic settlement at Gurnat Mari in Thebes, Egypt.

both running steeply down the face of the slope” forming key parts of the dwelling.⁸¹ In many cases, a built roof is not even necessary. Simply laying palm leaves or sugar stalks over the room’s opening would provide adequate shade and sufficient ventilation.⁸² The process of monastic building therefore is not necessarily always restricted to a particular class of skilled artisans, carpenters, or masons. This is also true for nonmonastic buildings, which in the villages share many similarities with the monastic built forms. While the majority of residences were made of mud brick, a few structures show the use of stone to secure particular architectural features and may, in some cases, illustrate the choices of available resources for building. We will see the higher, specialized skills were required for the building of churches and martyria. Palladius tells a story in which Dorotheus collected stones in the “desert by the sea” and made cells for those who could not build.⁸³ Stone could be gathered from a variety of locations including pharaonic monuments. Pharaonic spolia found its way into some monastic churches, such as at the White Monastery at Sohag.⁸⁴ The

local environment also provided relatively easy access to stone that could be cut to small boulder size (c. 20–30 cm diameter) and transported to nearby areas. An eighth-century receipt, likely from the Monastery of Apa Apollo, describes both the acquisition of stone and the builders involved. The text reads: “Our father is the one who writes to his son the scribe Apollo and Shenoute the builder. A stone has come into my hands from the stones ascribed to you, and I have given it to Papnoute the builder of Poš.”⁸⁵ Documentary evidence helps us envision that the leaders of monastic communities were often overseers of building projects and involved even within the movement of specific materials between monks under their charge.

Some epigraphic evidence for building and builders at monastic sites helps identify who played a role in building monastic settlements. At Philae, an inscription from 753 CE recounts how a layman gave a workshop to the Monastery of St. Mary for monastic use.⁸⁶ Other accounts of building projects are found in lintel inscriptions in monastic and lay homes. Sometimes the inscriptions identify the inhabitants and whether or not they were the builders of the structure. At the Monastery of Apa Apollo and the Monastery of Apa Jeremias, lintels provide information about the occupation or position of the monastic residents.⁸⁷ In the Fayyum, tenth-century lintel inscriptions in Fayyumic Coptic name craftsmen Severus, Gabriel, and George, as builders of their own homes.⁸⁸ All who would enter their homes would be reminded of the accomplishment of the masons, and thus the materials of the building would create a social reminder of the owner’s occupation and skills. Monastic inscriptions also reference craftsmen, builders, carpenters, painters, stonecutters, and men who worked with dung.⁸⁹ Monastic archives demonstrate that builders often were paid in goods of wine, clothing, salt, and grain. In the eighth century, the *pistikos* Enoch gave a wine receipt to Markos, who had built part of the “wall of the great house,”⁹⁰ which was likely a part of the Monastery of Apa Apollo.⁹¹

In addition to masonry, carpentry skills were needed to build monastic settlements. Finding wood was not difficult, as many date palm trees grow around the oases, the canals, and the Nile. The trunk of a palm tree is usually cut in two, with a long flat side used for creating a floor or roof; cutting the wood does not necessarily require a skilled woodworker. Palm beams can appear in the archaeological record, but in general roofing is rarely preserved. Wood could be worked to create doors and shutters for windows. Doors require greater carpentry skills to make and install, as they were an essential part of monastic residences, just like any other dwelling. In most cases, while the door and the wooden frame that once held the door is no longer extant, the grooves that held the frame and the sockets for the locking mechanism that secured the door can still be seen at several sites, such as at the quarry site of Dayr al-Dik (see Fig. 22).

In personal letters we hear the concern of late antique monks about their buildings. In the early eighth century Apa Helias was taken to task by another monk, Pinoute, for not making repairs to a monastic building under his charge at the site of Dayr al-Bala'yzah in Middle Egypt. Writing in Coptic (*P.Bal.* 241) Pinoute relates his concerns for the structure and his displeasure with Helias's neglect of the built environment:

+ First of all I greet and salute my dear honored brother [Apa] Helias. For I was told that since you came away from me you have not done any work to the small dwelling-place (*ma nshōpe*) until now, already the third year; you have not come further than its door and you have not built bricks (*netōbe*) over the yard, [nor] have you strengthened the beam (*tsoi*) which is broken, nor have you ... [...] downwards or upwards. Now ... [...] for ... (?) everything which you wished to do and I will do more than those (things). Now let me come in by the will of God to see anything you have done so that my heart be at rest ... Address: +Give it to my dear [honored brother Apa Hel]ias from Pinoute.⁹²

In this letter we learn of Pinoute's personal ties and concerns about a constructed building and the desire to ensure its maintenance by another. The beams may refer to traditional roofing materials such as palm trunks and reeds, such as still seen today inside the church at Dayr Anba Bisada in Akhmim (see Fig. 29). The lightweight roofs could be easily plastered, thus providing an easily constructed roof that worked well in an arid environment. Pinoute is also concerned that Helias has not built bricks to modify the yard, for a possible adjacent courtyard. In looking at the extensive brick buildings at Dayr al-Bala'yzah, we can see that the settlement consists of numerous buildings, and therefore structural maintenance seems a reasonable request for a homeowner. Such expressions of concern for the built environment by a monk are rare in the Late Antique documentary evidence. And yet the letter offers a new perspective on how one monastic regarded the built environment and his ties to the details that were used in its construction and maintenance.

With such fleeting sources, how can we reconstruct the movement of people into new locations and gain a relative impression of how monastics created a new Late Antique landscape? How do we determine the population density of Egypt in Late Antiquity and the numbers of men, primarily, who were moving into the nonagricultural areas? A demographic study of Egypt has several difficulties based primarily on the sources available for us to reconstruct population density, the size of cities, and landholdings in general.⁹³ As Laurens E. Tacoma expresses it,

The problem for the ancient world is that estimating population density requires knowledge of two figures: inhabited area and population size. In practice, independent figures for both are seldom obtainable, and there has been a natural tendency among ancient historians to work the other



29. Roofing made of palm trunks, sugar stalks, and plaster at Dayr Anba Bisada in Akhmim, Egypt. The ceiling has a small oculus to provide both direct and indirect light to the room.

way around, and estimate from inhabited areas the population size by using a fixed figure for population density ... The sometimes ignored danger in this is that cities have three instead of two dimensions: larger cities might have higher buildings rather than a larger inhabited area, and therefore have a larger population density. In the case of Roman Egypt this reverse method has not been employed systematically, no doubt because of the relative paucity of urban excavations.⁹⁴

Tacoma highlights the lack of evidence for establishing a baseline for comparison of domestic habitations. Without this, it is even harder to draw a fair assessment of the density of occupation at monasteries where several of the buildings were also two and three stories high. Some historians have estimated as many as 200 persons per hectare, and more conservative estimates would accept 40 persons per hectare.⁹⁵ In looking at a large monastic settlement, such as the Monastery of Apa Apollo, the population could be estimated to range from 4,000 to 20,000 persons using the same metrics.⁹⁶ Some indication of the relative sizes of communities appears in the travel-ogues of Late Antique pilgrims, although these numbers are not based on any quantitative data.

Given the difficulty for visitors to the monasteries to accurately estimate the number of monks at any one community, we are left with generalizations of relative size. In the *History of the Monks in Egypt* we read: "I also saw another vast company of monks of all ages living in the desert (*eremos*) and in the cultivated land (*chora*). Their number is past counting. There are so many of them that an early emperor could not assemble so large an army. For there is no town or village in Egypt and the Thebaid which is not surrounded by monasteries (*monastērion*) as if by walls."⁹⁷ In the same account the city of Oxyrhynchus is said to have 10,000 monks – 5,000 living within the city and the others living outside. The smaller communities led by Copres had as few as 50 monks,⁹⁸ but Apollo's desert community by Hermopolis had 500 monks.⁹⁹ Further south in Upper Egypt Abba Or directed 1,000 monks in the Thebaid,¹⁰⁰ and Ammon, who was associated with the Pachomian koinonia structure, oversaw 3,000 monks.¹⁰¹ Palladius's accounting is more conservative, as illustrated by his description of a Pachomian monastery in Panopolis. He writes: "When I went to Panopolis I found one of them having three hundred men. In this monastery I saw fifteen tailors, seven smiths, four carpenters, twelve camel drivers, and fifteen fullers. They work at every craft."¹⁰² The accuracy or discrepancy of the numbers is not as important as is the fact that the author who described the monastic settlements believed he was seeing significant numbers of monks, who lived both in the outer desert and in the towns and villages. Those in the outer or nearer desert were deeply engaged with village life by routing out animal infestations, healing the sick, and receiving visitors. The excavated remains of the numerous monastic settlements bolster

the accounts of monastic engagement with the world, as the distance between a monastic settlement and village could be as close as a thirty-minute walk.

THE HISTORICAL CONTEXT FOR BUILDING MONASTIC COMMUNITIES

Egypt's riverine landscape had a significant impact on monastic settlements and spatial configurations. The reclamation of the desert for habitation ushered in a new period of Late Antique expansion into areas previously used only for the extraction of natural resources, burials, and temporary shelters. In most cases, only limited documentary evidence was found at the earlier encampments, perhaps reflecting the lower level of literacy of the miners. With the movement of a more literate population into desert locations, the archaeological evidence for occupation seems to spike dramatically with physical modifications to caves, quarries, and tombs. Additionally, because monastics were not economically, physically, or socially isolated from others, their new residences became places for more complex encounters between those who lived on the fringes and those who settled in the agricultural and urban districts.

How could monastic sites come into existence at all? How did nonmonastic groups regard monastic estates, regardless of size, during the Byzantine and Islamic periods? What laws or codes were in place to support the construction of new settlements, such as monasteries, in Late Antique Egypt? These complex economic questions draw together the concerns of ecclesiastical, monastic, and secular authorities to monitor monastic built environments. Exploring these questions within the Egyptian milieu enables us to briefly consider the historical and social setting into which new settlements came to be.¹⁰³ It is also apparent, based on the extensive archaeological and documentary evidence, that while there were building regulations in Constantinople, the power of imperial law had a limited impact on restricting or monitoring the construction activities of monastic and lay communities both within and outside urban areas.¹⁰⁴ As a region deemed to be led by heretical teachings, it is not unexpected that we find inherent lapses in the enforcement and adherence to imperial regulations in Egypt.¹⁰⁵

Monastics did construct numerous and sometimes massive settlements by the sixth century, but there is often very little textual evidence to document *how* and *why* monastic estates came to be and what they looked like in the earlier centuries. The documentary evidence often mentions physical sites that already exist and refers to events involving monastic places without any indication to the history of the settlements.¹⁰⁶ In many cases the monastic locations mentioned have not yet been identified, and certainly no archaeological record exists for the sites before the late fifth century.¹⁰⁷ Additionally, the sources do not always speak to the concerns that we may have regarding the methods

and policies for construction. Richard Alston captures the bedeviling nature of our sources for understanding spatial history as he writes: “[S]imply amassing the material and connecting the papyrological and archaeological remains (even allowing for the substantial methodological difficulties that thereby arise) does not, in fact, provide us with a way of understanding these houses and their pattern of occupation. The crucial interpretative context does not emerge straightforwardly from the material.”¹⁰⁸ He further stresses the uneven nature of the evidence that does “not have discursive treatments of spatial issues.”¹⁰⁹ For Alston, the challenge is to consider how the built environment relates to the “social forces and practices in the wider social and spatial environment.”¹¹⁰ In addressing the interconnectivity between social and spatial concerns, Mark Swanson articulates how Egyptian building projects were essential for solidifying the emerging Coptic Orthodox community under Muslim rulers. While Swanson is looking in particular at the actions of Coptic patriarchs, his observation of buildings as acts of identity construction is also appropriate for monastic communities. Both institutions were “doing their best to maintain (and occasionally to extend) the network of sacred spaces that provided Coptic Orthodox culture its territorial rootedness.”¹¹¹ Monastic communities, like the patriarchs, regarded their institutions as embodiments of their beliefs as seen in the construction of their narrative foundation accounts. What evidence then can be found to help provide a social context for the foundations and to consider the social forces Alston regards as essential for interpreting the meaning behind the built environments in Antiquity?

Permanent monastic settlements came to be through a variety of circumstances. Many of the small residences, for one or two monks, reflected private donations of property by a patron. For example, some monastic dwellings were simply gifts of unoccupied structures granted, without legal documentation, from a landowner to a monastic.¹¹² Pachomius regarded abandoned houses as the most practical solutions for habitation. Other times, spaces were simply available for occupation such as caves and quarries that might overlook fields below.¹¹³ There is some evidence that the buildings for lay confraternities (*philoponeia*) were also eventually converted to monastic residences.¹¹⁴

The selling and granting of property to monastic communities also provided much-needed real estate that could be sold for profit, leased to others, or inhabited by monks. Initially, monastic property seems to have been held by the individual monks and not by the monastery as a separate entity. In his study of the earliest papyrological sources for monasticism in fourth- and early fifth-century Egypt, Malcolm Choat identified only eighty direct references to monasticism of any kind.¹¹⁵ The majority of these sources are letters that involve a monastic individual, and only rarely are their communities or locations identified. Therefore, even in the fourth century, we are unable to trace monastic institutions, but rather only “individual monks acquiring and owning

property.”¹¹⁶ For example, an early letter from the archive of Nephros, written around 323 CE, documents the selling of a house (*oikos*) by an individual living on the mountain (*oros*) of Hathor to another monastic called Aurelius Eusebios, who also lives there.¹¹⁷ Clearly there is a monastic community with some identity linking it to the topography; yet, the selling of the house was between two individuals and not between the community of Hathor and anyone else. Choat, using the only eight sources that comment explicitly on landholding of any form, offers a useful image of how monastic landscapes were understood in formal terms:

[I]ndividual responsibility for property may have proved easier for the State to comprehend, and simple for monks and their monasteries to administer. It is only as we move into the fifth and following centuries, when the fame of monasticism had spread and people were familiar with the existence and concept of monasteries, that the monasteries themselves began putting their name to lands they held in their own name, and paying taxes on them as such.¹¹⁸

Choat's interpretation offers a very effective model of the evolutionary nature of the monastic movement in reshaping the civic and religious landscape of Late Antique Egypt. As sites not established by the church, or by the lay community directly, the process of site building could follow only the most natural course, which was through the hands of private individuals. Once it was clear that monasteries were institutions, separate from ecclesiastical authorities and becoming large estates in their own right, they began to act as independent entities with internal representatives in economic matters.

The most frequent transfer of property took the form of testaments and contracted sales. Monastic property could be bequeathed between monks and private individuals. In a testament from 569 CE, two brothers, Anoup and Julius, and their mother, Mesainê, seek to resolve a question as to whether the brothers, who are about to enter the monastery (*toou*) at Pharou, may inherit monastic property.¹¹⁹ Since we can see the pattern of private monastic ownership as early as the fourth century, the concern in this document is not *if* the brothers may inherit as monks, but rather what *portion* they will inherit and how that relates to the monastic community they are joining. The testament provides evidence of the blurred lines between the roles of individual monks as members of a merging monastic identity of a settlement.¹²⁰ The testament, as Leslie MacCoull argues, makes clear that Egyptian monks were not observing the renunciation of property even in the sixth century, and that this tradition would not change in future centuries.¹²¹ Other documents reveal the role of individual monks, perhaps working with the blessing of their community's leader, to transform the spatial configuration of the community. For example, we learn of the desires of a monk named Psaios who has received a cell (*kellion*)

to expand the property to include a *xenodocheion*, or a hostel, for accommodating pilgrims to the Monastery of the Apostles at Pharouou.¹²² His account describes the transformation of a new space to respond to changing functions within the community.

Another avenue for the expansion or modification of monastic estates was through the support of the Alexandrian patriarchs, although often this was explicitly in the construction of churches in cities and remodeling structures at existing monasteries.¹²³ Patriarchal support for new building programs may reflect wider imperial efforts to have ecclesiastical oversight over monastic estates. The later medieval church account of this period, the *History of the Patriarchs of Alexandria*, outlines the impressions of how patriarchs and monks worked together to mutual benefit in establishing a physical presence through new structures.¹²⁴ When monastic settlements are mentioned, the sites are part of a larger narrative of Egypt's religious and political landscape, reflecting the power and faithfulness of a particular patriarch or his relationship with secular authorizes. At the end of the fifth century, Emperor Zeno, the "blessed prince" in one story, supported Patriarch John I (r. 494–503) by supplying the monks of Wadi al-Natrun with wheat, wine, oil, and "whatever they required for the furnishing of their cells."¹²⁵ In the account of Patriarch Theodosius I (r. 535–567), we learn that Aristomachus, the governor of Egypt, authorized the construction of new churches and towers for the monks living in the deserts.¹²⁶ The governor's support directly violated imperial laws instituted by Justinian I to curtail private, religious constructions. In the case of Aristomachus, he was persuaded by a local elite, Dorotheus of Sakhâ, who was particularly attentive to the needs of aging monks in the various settlements. The actions of a private developer, here Dorotheus, were effective in persuading the governor to show acts of charitable giving to sustain monastic communities.

Byzantine building regulations appear in the *Codex Theodosianus* (*Cod. Theod.* c. 438 CE) and later in Justinian's *Institutiones* (*Inst.*), the *Digesta* (*Dig.*), and the *Codex* (*Cod. Just.*). The *Cod. Just.* is the only imperial publication to include a section dedicated specifically to laws governing private buildings (8.10).¹²⁷ The regulations provided clear guidelines for constructions and established appropriate avenues for when new buildings could be constructed.¹²⁸ New buildings needed to be a set distance away from public buildings (*Cod. Just.* 8.10.9), whereas it also became legal for those living in the provinces to erect walls around their property (*Cod. Just.* 8.10.10).¹²⁹ While Justinian's regulations governed large urban areas such as Constantinople, it is unlikely that these laws were enforced at all in places where the Byzantines were facing significant resistance to their authority, such as in Egypt. Although opinions have shifted as to how extensive imperial law was adhered to in the urban centers of Egypt, it is clear from legal documents from the sixth century on that fewer and fewer disputes were settled in court.¹³⁰ Clergymen and monastic leaders

became essential mediators in legal disputes and Egyptians sought to use local religious authorities to help them settle family matters.¹³¹

Even in Alexandria, where the Byzantines had a more obvious presence, the Egyptian Christians, as reported in the later *History of the Patriarchs*, were able to build two entirely new churches “in secret” when Justinian closed and sealed the doors to their non-Chalcedonian churches to prohibit liturgical services.¹³² Upon Justinian learning that his actions did not inhibit the Christians from meeting, he reopened the churches and this time elected to simply change the liturgy to one favoring Chalcedonian theology, apparently hoping nobody would notice the difference. The story reflects, in part, the perceived independence that emerged after the Council of Chalcedon in which the Christian populations in Egypt would slowly divide into Coptic, Miaphysite or anti-Chalcedonian, and Melkite or pro-Chalcedonian communities.¹³³

However important doctrinal divisions and exertions of imperial law may appear in the Coptic narratives, the real concern regarding building constructions was tied more to issues of safety and the preservation of older public structures. The building of new structures within Alexandria and other *metropoleis* and in the countryside illustrates significant shifts in the built environment of Byzantine and Islamic Egypt. In her historical study of building codes, Isabella Baldini Lippolis writes: “One after another, the laws collected in the codes testify to the desire to preserve public areas from the frequent ‘invasion’ of private buildings, a phenomenon that appeared, from the state’s point of view, to be far too common in the cities of Late Antiquity.”¹³⁴ Abandoned temples and residences were often reoccupied and “[f]requently, the authorities turned a blind eye to this trend.”¹³⁵ In Baldini Lippolis’s assessment, the real concern was “the encroachment on public areas by private developers.”¹³⁶ Her observation helps us envision the methods that were used by monastic builders, as they were essentially “private developers,” making use of a variety of spaces that were abandoned and moving into land that was once public and shifting it into the private realm. This may in part help provide the context to see a law from 390 CE as an effort to encourage monastics to move out of urban areas as *Cod. Theod.* 16.3.1 reads: “If any persons should be found in the profession of monks, they shall be ordered to seek out and to inhabit desert places and desolate solitudes.”¹³⁷

While monastics were certainly repurposing buildings in Egypt, they were not the only ones in the empire to occupy public areas for residential quarters. Byzantine laws do address the need for clear regulations for the construction and upkeep of new housing.¹³⁸ The archaeological evidence of changes in town planning are evident in Byzantine cities such as Herdonia, Alexandria, Rome, Gortyn, Ephesus, and Mauritanian Caesarea, where we see poorer housing erected in forums, temples, and above warehouses.¹³⁹ In the fourth century, laws prohibited the exploitation of abandoned structures for valuable

stone; by the early fifth century (*Cod. Theod.* 16.10.25), opinions had changed to allow builders and owners to freely destroy pagan monuments as they saw fit. They could alter the older sacred landscape for needed materials and then inscribe Christian symbols on the exploited pagan spaces.¹⁴⁰ In the end, the edict allowed for the outright extraction of *spolia* for reuse in both monastic and nonmonastic constructions and public spaces were fundamentally less protected.¹⁴¹

The imperial laws were clearly designed to regulate building activities in the major cities, but what happened in the regions farther away from the empire's urban centers? For the early sixth-century Near East we can consult a unique document written by an architect, Julian of Ascalon, who lived during the time of Justinian.¹⁴² Julian's *Treatise* is preserved in a later Byzantine source, *Hexabiblos* (*Hex.*) by Armenopoulos, and the content of the treatise provides a unique view of the history of building, construction regulations, and how homeowners regarded the importance of a view, airflow, and safety.¹⁴³ Julian of Ascalon's text is framed by a discussion of the four elements (air, earth, fire, and water) and their impact on the built environment in Ascalon. While he does not explicitly address monastics using public spaces, he comments on a variety of facets of buildings, workshops, and settlement planning that may help us understand the context of monastic planning. His central concerns include the relative proximity of buildings one to another, the impact of new construction or repairs on adjacent homeowners, and the need to have adequate light and airflow between buildings, especially when considering workshops such as glassmaking, kilns, bakeries, and the makers of condiments.¹⁴⁴ In Hakim's assessment, the majority of the "stipulations in Julian's treatise are prescriptive" rather than proscriptive and thus reflect Byzantine efforts to extend administrative oversight into urban planning.¹⁴⁵

As we move into the more deserted places of the countryside and rural settings, the prescriptive rules give way to proscriptive rules that governed the spatial design of monastic settlements. The evolution of monasteries into estates with a legal identity appears frequently in the documentary evidence from the sixth century onward. The Coptic evidence for determining if a contract land is issued by a monk or by a clergyman, according to Tonio Sebastian Richter, is difficult to determine from the sources. He explains how the "nature of their property and its relationship to the estates of their monasteries or churches" is equally clouded by the fact that monastics are acting independently from their institutions.¹⁴⁶ One area in which we see the independence is in how monastic settlements were treated during the Persian and Arab conquests.

With the Persian (618–629 CE) and Arab (629–639 CE) conquests of Egypt in the mid-seventh century, some monastic lands near Alexandria were destroyed, according to the *History of the Patriarchs*. Reflecting an apparent divine judgment on the unorthodox nature of the monks who resided within,

the text explains why some monastic lands were leveled and abandoned by the conquerors.¹⁴⁷ When the Sasanians marched toward Alexandria, they destroyed a collection of “six hundred flourishing monasteries, like dovecotes,” and killed the majority of the residents. In the end, the Persians had killed the “independent” and “insolent without fear” monastics and left their monasteries in “ruins to this day.”¹⁴⁸ Yet, the archaeological evidence for the destruction of the Persian conquests has proved to be more elusive than what is attested in the historical accounts of the events, despite historians and archaeologists often turning to the conquests as the catalysts for any sign of conflagration at sites.¹⁴⁹ In considering Julian of Ascalon’s concerns about buildings, it is evident that house fires happened frequently, and thus builders needed to be attentive to limiting their occurrence if at all possible. The historical narrative of destruction, and later restoration, of monasteries in Egypt therefore may reflect a need by Christian authors to expunge independent monasteries from memory and also to offer further accolades to leaders who could expand monastic lands.

Aside from the tumultuous start of the seventh century, on the whole we begin to see more evidence for the expansion of the total area and number of monastic settlements after the Arab conquest.¹⁵⁰ We can observe greater participation by individual monks, their monasteries, and local communities in the leasing of land and the transfer of property.¹⁵¹ The nature of our sources is regionally distinct such that the documentary evidence comes predominately from Middle and Upper Egyptian sites, whereas the literary sources, reflecting more codified, ecclesiastical traditions, reflect experiences in Lower Egypt. The latter reflects the interactions between the patriarchal authority and the Islamic governing elites in the Delta, primarily in Alexandria and in the region around Fustat.¹⁵² In looking at the sources reflecting the center of the shifting religious landscape of the Delta, Maged Mikhail concludes that Arab administrators were apparently less concerned with local religious disputes or concerns. The initial indifference is borne out in the inconsistent and often ambivalent attitude toward Christian constructions.¹⁵³ For example, Patriarch Benjamin I (d. 662) witnessed the transition from Byzantine to Arab rule and took advantage of the moment to pursue new constructions and restorations throughout Egypt, on occasion with support from the Muslim governor.¹⁵⁴

The shift in Islamic ambivalence or passivity toward Coptic ecclesiastical issues comes to an end with the late seventh and early eighth centuries with the Muslim governor ‘Abd al-‘Azīz ibn Marwān (d. 705 CE).¹⁵⁵ As governor he was supportive of new church construction, and the *History of the Patriarchs* illustrates a tacit agreement to allow for new churches and adornments sponsored by the Alexandrian patriarchs. During Patriarch Isaac of Alexandria’s (d. 692) two-year tenure, he witnessed several encounters with the Muslim governor ‘Abd al-‘Aziz. As recounted in the near-contemporary Coptic *Life of Isaac* by Mena of Nikiou, Isaac was often invited by the governor to meet and

discuss the needs of the church.¹⁵⁶ If this was the case in the more regulated urban center, what type of building oversight and regulations could we anticipate in the rural areas and in Middle and Upper Egypt? Regulations regarding heights of church towers, the sound of bells, and the proximity to Muslim homes and mosques can be seen as expressions of continuity with earlier Byzantine policies regarding spatial planning. According to Mikhail: “Nothing approaching the austerity of the *Covenant of ‘Umar* can be cited: only bits and pieces of regulation and sporadic enforcement are evident in the historical record. Furthermore, on the occasions when churches were destroyed, they were usually restored in a matter of years (if not months), often regardless of the church’s actual antiquity.”¹⁵⁷ Thus, while religious differences may be pointed to as a rationale for curtailing Christian construction, Muslim building policies evoke a community’s concerns for a view toward a mosque, the best soundscape for the muezzin, and a similar evolutionally approach to transforming the built landscape.

Sales of land and houses to monastic institutions continued in the eighth century, illustrating the full development of monastic communities as independent entities.¹⁵⁸ The tradition of dividing and bequeathing property for expanding monastic estates is exhibited in an eighth-century testament of Anna, a nonmonastic woman, donating her property to the Monastery (*heneete*) of Paul of Koulol in the mountain (*toou*) of Jeme (see Fig. 24).¹⁵⁹ Written with the dual dating of “year of Diocletian the king 451, and the year of the Saracens 114,” Anna’s will grants Abba Zacharias, Abba Philotheus, and Abba Mena, “the superiors and the *oikonomoi*,” as representatives of the monastery, her house that is located on Methuselah Street. She also gives them a portion of another house that she owns on St. Anasias Street. Both houses are in Jeme, the Late Antique town built inside the walls of Medinet Habu in Thebes. It was not uncommon for houses to be divided into apartments and even for specific rooms, terraces, and courtyards to be divided between individuals, both lay and monastic. Finally, Anna offers her half of a section of land co-owned by Abraham, son of Athanasius, and a quarter of her bakery. Although the three monks are mentioned specifically, Anna identifies the three men as her heirs followed by the subsequent *oikonomoi*. In this example we see that the monastic community has received property that they may use, such as a bakery, or sell, such as the residences in Jeme. As a region far removed from the urban centers of the Delta, the documentary source offers a unique perspective on economic activities of property transactions that are less evident in the historical records in the north.

By the end of the tenth century, the Fatimids undertook a significant building program to alter the visual landscape of Cairo and the areas around Fustat.¹⁶⁰ In addition to the construction of mosques and palaces, the Fatimids and their administrators sponsored building campaigns to facilitate

the economic growth of the capital by building warehouses and markets.¹⁶¹ A significant curtailment and apparently outright aggression toward Christian structures begin with Caliph Hārūn al-Rashīd (170–197 AH/786–809 CE), who called for the destruction of specific churches.¹⁶² The historical sources for this period also bear the same regional bias found in the earlier centuries. Although we have reference to the works by Arab historians such as Ibn Lahī'a (d. 790) and al-Layth ibn Sa'd (d. 791) for events in Egypt, the most informative histories for the transition are the works by Muḥammad ibn Yūsuf al-Kindī (*Books of Governors* and *Books of Judges*). However, as Hugh Kennedy explains, "While they are in many ways excellent, these Arabic accounts have a very limited focus, and their interests are almost entirely confined to the activities of the ruling group in the capital, Fustat, with occasional references to Alexandria. To understand anything of life outside of this charmed circle, we have to look at Christian sources."¹⁶³ By the middle of the ninth century, the equilibrium between the Christian and Muslim communities was lost. The proscriptive attitude Muslim elites once held toward Christian building gave way to more prescriptive policies in the tenth century.

In looking briefly at the building codes and policies evident under Byzantine and Islamic administration, we can see the inherent flexibility and tolerance for new constructions from the fifth to the ninth centuries. In particular, after the Arab conquest, the conditions seem ideally to favor monastic expansion alongside the patriarchal building programs evinced in the Delta. With Wadi al-Natrun and Kellia situated between Alexandria and Fustat, the two monastic settlements benefited from Christian patronage and pilgrimage. Wadi al-Natrun served as the home for many of the patriarchs, and therefore in a position of privilege in the written sources.

THEORETICAL ANALYSIS

The shift in settlement patterns in Late Antique Egypt comes with the advent of monasticism and new building projects in areas not used for long-term domestic habitation in the past.¹⁶⁴ Monastics built many new settlements, and in some cases they also used previously occupied caves, tombs, and temporary shelters of those who once lived in the fringes. Gravediggers,¹⁶⁵ soldiers,¹⁶⁶ traders,¹⁶⁷ quarrymen, and miners¹⁶⁸ frequently found themselves sheltered in temporary dwellings during their work projects.¹⁶⁹ Monks later modified long-abandoned tombs, quarries, and partially abandoned buildings in villages to establish their new communities separate from preexisting towns.¹⁷⁰ From the fifth to ninth centuries, monks participated in a process of desert reclamation by electing to use areas on the borderline between the densely settled areas of the cultivated valley and the Delta. Unlike other areas of the



30. View toward the boundary wall at the monastic site of Dayr al-Bala'yazah in Middle Egypt, looking toward the settlement, which is located beyond the wall, and the cultivated fields below.

eastern Mediterranean, Egypt does not have a countryside *per se*.¹⁷¹ Hence, while other regions of the eastern Mediterranean, such as Anatolia, Syria, and Palestine, witnessed the development of rural or countryside monasticism, Egypt's topographical features created the conditions for a desert monasticism that was very near and visible to most urban communities.¹⁷² In addition, since the Nile served as the main avenue for transportation, most travelers could see monastic settlements while sailing. The white limestone-plastered walls and domes emerge against the beige of the desert's vertical walls. For example the massive mud brick walls at Dayr al-Bala'yazah in Middle Egypt appear to fade into the landscape, but traces of white plaster reveal the multistoried buildings would be quite visible from a distance (see Fig. 30). In sum, the Nile, as Roger

Bagnall succinctly phrases it, “organizes space.”¹⁷³ The organizational feature of the Nile also extends to the sharply rising desert cliffs, which frame the Nile Valley, and the Delta, whose many waterways created islands, marshes, and smaller desert areas and provided networks of connectivity throughout the *chora* (see Fig. 19).¹⁷⁴

Placing the materiality of monastic built spaces at the center of any discussion of monastic archaeology requires a restructuring of how we look at spatial divisions between those who adopt the monastic life and those who did not. The rereading of space through the work of phenomenological theorists offers an important readjustment to how archaeologists and historians once classified and quantified Egyptian monastic spaces. Architectural historians, for example, point to the importance of the urban environment in Late Antiquity as the central defining feature. We have already seen that earlier settlements in desert mines were devalued by modern scholars in large part because of the propensity to focus on the impressive built forms along the Nile. What then do we deduce about communities that intentionally elected *not* to build in similar places as preexisting communities? As self-expressed outsiders to the “world” and yet simultaneously insiders to the “heavenly world,” monastic communities rest in a liminal landscape.

The theory of the “residential outsider,” as presented in monastic literature, may assist us in reflecting on the ways in which we have come to know about monastics and the landscapes in which they reside. Anthropological assessments of outsider societies offer potentially applicable models for reading monastic settlements found on the edge of traditional societies. Anthropologist Lewis Binford described the quest to understand how the land has been inhabited as a desire to understand the “life space” of the human community. Binford’s life space explains why specific areas are arranged with artifactual assemblages to facilitate daily living.¹⁷⁵ Within the ancient city or village, the ability to interpret settlement patterns is easier to digest than settlements on the perceived boundaries of society. Desertscape, by their very nature, are regarded as boundary crossers. It is at the edge of the cultivation that the escarpment vividly rises up in contrast to the lush fields below. The near desert is the transition between the profane world of the city and the marketplace, and the spiritual realm where demons were thought to reside in the inner desert.

David Sibley explains how the construction of marginal communities is characterized by a language of deliberate misrepresentation by a community. Gypsies and nomads, for example, are often presented in history as living outside of the norms of civilized society. They come to represent minority cultures and are tied closely to where and how they live. The fact that both groups move, rather than settle, creates the impression of instability and a rejection of the sedentary, urban environment and society all together. Sibley explains: “The perception of minority cultures as being beyond the boundary

of 'society' is associated not only with characterizations of the group but also with images of particular places, the landscapes of exclusion which express the marginal status of the outside group."¹⁷⁶ The exclusivity of the outsider groups then responds to external pressures to conform to societal norms. How could this model apply then to an assessment of Egyptian monastic settlements?

Early twentieth-century scholars and travelers to Egypt regarded the desert settlements of monks as products of a self-imposed marginalization and therefore clearly an "outside group." The physical location of the monastic communities could not, in the minds of the modern scholar or tourist, be anything but the residents of those who shunned the world. In part, this anti-monastic view was shaped by a well-conditioned dislike for the desert and any population, ancient or modern, who chose to reside in the desert when the Nile Valley was so clearly an area rich with vegetation and signs of civilization. Rarely did a viewer ascribe ownership to any other group, such as quarrymen, soldiers, or tomb workmen. Instead, the structures are described as miserable, shabby, and pathetic in order to denigrate the value of the dwellings in light of the a priori belief that only monks would elect to willingly live in such areas. The rhetorical construction of an "exclusive landscape" emerged from such assessments and subsequently became a central idea that monks were apart from the urban world. How valid is this reading of monastic settlements?

Two features of the "landscape of exclusion" are important for assessing if monastic settlements are in fact *exclusive landscapes*. First, communities select locations that are perceived to be "marginal, residual spaces" that point to the differentness or "outsider status of the minority."¹⁷⁷ Furthermore, some communities adopt "places which are avoided by members of the dominant society because they appear threatening – a fear of the 'other' becomes a fear of place."¹⁷⁸ In the early history of the monastic movement monastics *did* move into locations that were abandoned parts of a town, the unoccupied quarries and tombs, and areas usually inhabited by those in the lower levels of society. In addition, prior to Late Antiquity, there were far fewer settlements on the edges of the cultivation. The limited settlement may be due in part to the fear of the desert environment as a space not easily manipulated by human activity. The desert was a dangerous landscape where spiritual actors could impart harm upon individuals.

Monastic literature is filled with the image of the untrained monk being attacked while in the desert by demons or by temptations.¹⁷⁹ The Egyptian desert, in particular, was not the realm for the faint of heart. Those who were not spiritually strong were not encouraged to venture into this space alone. Therefore, when monastics did seek residence in the fearful landscape, they were immediately seen as those who engaged in fierce combat with the demons and other spirits that lived in the desert.¹⁸⁰ Further, "[t]he labeling of places as threatening confirms the otherness of the minorities with whom the

places are associated, and relegation to marginal spaces serves to amplify deviance.”¹⁸¹ The threatening nature of the Egyptian desert appears in many contexts, but the reality is that many pilgrims, family members, and tradesmen also ventured to monastic communities and therefore to the marginalized spaces. Therefore, while initially the monastic movement to the fringes was a movement reflecting an “outsider” exclusive landscape, it quickly transformed into an “insider” exclusive landscape whereby those on the outside of the monastic community desired to come in so that they could, even temporarily, be among the heavenly insiders.

A second feature of the “landscape of exclusion” is how the built environment creates boundaries around the society and thereby provides particular spatial divisions. The community’s ability to spatially configure the land is then directly linked to its power to exert control. Power and spatial divisions confer the “power to exclude.”¹⁸² This model helps us understand the early history of property transfers that were private and excluded by larger authoritative agents. The location of monastic communities predominately within a neglected or abandoned landscape of cliffs, wadis, quarries, natural caves, and tombs made it possible for monks to select their own boundaries. Their residences, one might argue, were separated from the insider community by the physical distance as they elected to inhabit a new landscape and thereby define exclusivity by their new location relative to older villages and towns.

While the desert is valued in religious literature as a testing ground for spiritual development, it is also recognized as a physically and emotionally demanding space. Therefore, those who are able to successfully navigate these challenges are in turn regarded as being different, but not deviant. Unlike gypsies who may be scorned for their difference and deviance from cultural norms, monastics were attributed with qualities that made their perceived “deviance” acceptable to the point that they are considered “angelic.” The mysterious Desert Fathers, who once were the outsiders in society, give way to a growing popularity that witnesses an increase in monastic settlements and change in status to the exclusive insiders.¹⁸³ In the eyes of John Cassian, Palladius, Egeria, and others, monastics became soldiers of Christ; they became residents of heaven living now on earth.¹⁸⁴ By remaining within these fearful landscapes, the inhabitants civilized and conquered the environment, transforming it into areas that were tame. Later narrative foundation accounts of monastic communities explain why individuals would willingly elect to move into such dangerous places.¹⁸⁵

Monastics, therefore, moved between outsider and insider status, resulting in communities that were visible and accessible. As self-appointed outsiders, monastics placed themselves in historically underutilized landscapes.¹⁸⁶ Despite the spatial rhetoric of exclusivity and separateness in monastic literature, documentary evidence belies the fact that monks and visitors moved across the

imaginary boundaries that surface in monastic literature. Without a greater effort to address the presence of the individual within the landscape that was inhabited, we have “finely crafted individuals floating in an empty black void of history.”¹⁸⁷ The consideration of the materiality of the desertscape can help establish a theoretical model for a “re-territorialization” in which the persons and landscape are intertwined through the materials of the spaces that establish monastic space.

Antony Brown argues that while the environment is important for understanding the unique characteristics of the alluvial environmental and archaeological history, geoarchaeology does not allow us enough evidence to predetermine a region’s history. He explains that the environment provides a factor that individuals respond *to* but are *not* constrained by. He is clear that he does not support the structuralist position in which the environment determines the extent of human agency: “The physical and biological resources of alluvial environments are seen as offering changing, complex and integrated sets of possibilities to human groups at costs which may or may not be acceptable when judged on their own terms.”¹⁸⁸ Similarly, when Karl W. Butzer describes the relationship between the natural environment and site formation, he considers individuals as “geomorphic agents” who participate in a *reciprocal* relationship, for they “carry inorganic and organic materials to a site, deliberately or inadvertently, including matter for constructing shelter and housing, making and using tools, and processing and consuming food, as well as matter for fuel, clothing and ornamentation” into a site.¹⁸⁹ The actions of the geomorphic agents, monastic builders in this case, contribute to the environment and its archaeosedimentary strata. For Butzer the interplay between cultural activities and the biophysical processes are responsive, and archaeologists should remember that “the controlling geomorphic system includes cultural components that modify its steering dynamism, its dominant processes, and its tangible results.”¹⁹⁰

Brown and Butzer offer a reminder that the Egyptian landscape has its own unique features, and the need for water was a central feature of site selection and design. While the natural environment is not a force that by its very essence constrains human agency or choice, accessibility to water is an undeniable requirement for site selection.¹⁹¹ Proximity to water, the ability to dig wells, and the construction of cisterns all play a role in helping transform a site into a suitable location for long-term habitation. Many quarry sites were linked to quarry roads that served to move cut stone, but also to the closest, accessible sources of water. In terms of the Late Antique landscape, monastic builders were free, just like their predecessors, to use the entirety of the land before them when selecting locations for new communities and would have been aware of the need to have accessible water. Prior to the expansion of settlements into the nearby hills and edges of the cultivated lands, Egyptian



31. Stone structures made on the terraces by the pharaonic tombs at Amarna in Middle Egypt.

villages and cities appear primarily in the land adjacent to the flood plain, the fertilized land, or in the western oases, such as the Fayyum.¹⁹²

For example the monastic settlement at Amarna in Middle Egypt helps illustrate the way in which monastic built environments transformed settlement patterns (see Fig. 31). The site was home originally to the capital for the famous Eighteenth Dynasty pharaoh Akhenaten, complete with tombs for his family and numerous officials. His efforts to restructure Egypt's religious culture were unwanted and unappreciated, as his immediate successors dismantled his city. The site was therefore abandoned for about 2,000 years, although some tombs served as convenient shelters and long-term housing for those working in the inner desert. By the sixth century, part of the abandoned city and associated tombs was transformed for a Christian community, which included a church in the tomb of Panehsy, several habitations in the region of the North Tombs, and a settlement with mud brick buildings to the south, known as Kom el-Nana.¹⁹³ Several other Amarna-period tombs and natural caves were reused and modified with the addition of some stone and mud brick structures extending from the original features. As Gillian Pyke notes, the builders were attuned to the escarpment in their modifications, and while

there was clearly a sixth- and seventh-century settlement around the North Tombs, it is unclear exactly who was living in the spaces.¹⁹⁴ Builders used stone available within the immediate vicinity and used a dry-stone construction method. How did these structures, which are akin to temporary shelters, fit within a larger community of residents or relate to the monastery below at Kom el-Nana? The settlement around the North Tombs at Amarna does not have signs of dense habitation aside from the limestone cobbles and chips used to make the walls for modest dwellings. Pyke suggests that since “there is no particular evidence for quarrying or other industrial activity,” it is most likely a monastic foundation of some kind.¹⁹⁵ The excavation and survey of the area has produced only a handful of Coptic ostraca, and thus we are left to interpret the spatial configuration at Amarna and consider who built these residences. With the presence of Kom el-Nana in the northern plain below the tombs, it seems that the church and the settlements at the North Tombs were likely part of a monastic community.

Monks were certainly not the first to consider the convenient caves, quarries, abandoned homes, and tombs for convenient shelter. They selected locations that were not contested spaces and relatively available for settlement. Local and ecclesiastical authorities had limited concern for the settlements on the fringes, since many areas were already abandoned. Pharaonic tombs, such as those at Amarna, had long lost the doors that sealed their interior rooms, and many individuals, prior to the monastic movement, had found shelter in the tombs as is attested by the number of graffiti found on the tombs throughout Egypt. The built environments were therefore efforts by monastic builders to have continuity by building structures that would last and demonstrate the stability of God’s mission for monastics in the desert – the discovery of water, the taming of animals, and the testimony of the dead all underscore the monastic right to inhabit the land.

If we link individuals to a spatial context, as Tim Ingold states is necessary for any effective interpretation of archaeological material, we can ground people within the landscape through their actions.¹⁹⁶ The need to consider how individuals acted within a space and created specific areas for monastic living is essential for considering the materiality of religious life. In Ingold’s assessment, there is essential value in objects, architecture, and materials, and therefore materiality offers a path for thinking in new ways about how objects come to be in relationship with individuals and their communities. By considering the built environments as the materials born from monastic social relationships within a wider landscape of the insider and outsider areas, we are better prepared to differentiate between the lived experience in the actual landscape, such as at Kom el-Nana or Saqqara, and see the difference with the generalized landscape created through rhetorical writing about places like Sketis or Kellia.

CONCLUSION

In *The Social Logic of Space*, Bill Hillier and Julienne Hanson lament how frequently the environment has no serious impact in the theoretical readings of space and the built form in the historical record. Hillier and Hanson point to a problematic paradigm by which scholars regard a building as “an object whose spatial form is a form of social ordering ... the physical environment has no social content and society has no spatial content.”¹⁹⁷ As Edward Swenson explains, “reconstructing the sensual experience of particular spaces most often privileges the ideological intent of those who designed and built the monuments” over the practical needs to create shelter in a specific landscape.¹⁹⁸ A dismissive view of the environment – in this case the Egyptian desertscape, cliffs, and associated cultivated lands – fosters a one-dimensional view of the landscape. By building a complex landscape, we can move the spiritualized landscape to one side while we take a comprehensive view of a variety of factors shaping the actual landscape, the placement of the settlements, the environmental reasons for living in specific locations, and the modifications of the natural environment for living. An ecohistorical view of the landscape fosters a more nuanced reading of how the natural environment was adapted and altered in Late Antiquity. With this foundation now in place, we are better poised to read the letters, prayers, and legal contracts that were written about the monastic spaces to ascertain how Late Antique residents viewed their own landscape.

FOUR

LATE ANTIQUE DOCUMENTARY EVIDENCE AND THE MONASTIC LANDSCAPE

THE DESIRE TO RELOCATE TO THE OUTSKIRTS OF THE CULTIVATION AND TO subject oneself to more dangers in the forms of animals, limited water, and questionable shelter might have appeared reckless to Late Antique urban dwellers. The desert and its dangers were in close proximity to the cultivated lands, and if someone was unable to withstand the heat, the sand storms, and the snakes, he could easily return to the more comfortable and safer corners of the village. Peter Brown called the desert a constructed myth, and James Goehring eloquently illustrates how the myth shaped a monastic identity.¹ The desert served as a metaphor for monastics to talk about place and space and how those functioned as tools for maintaining or monitoring monastic behaviors. The idea of monks going into the deserted or abandoned landscape to escape the world and all its trappings is a literary trope that reflects carefully constructed monastic ideals for the occupation of new areas.

This chapter examines the ways in which monastic authors described the Egyptian landscape – the terminology monastic and lay authors used to sketch the spatial divisions of the land, both real and imagined, with regard to the physical landscape; the boundaries between the inhabited and uninhabited land; and the monastic built environment. The sources span a period from the third to the ninth century, allowing us to observe shifts in how the landscape and monastic built communities were understood both in general and specific terms. The general spatial terminology casts the widest view to encompass how monastic authors perceived the physical world. Seemingly general terms such

as *place* or *dwelling place* or *room* begin to bear highly religious connotations when used in a monastic context. Additionally, the use of architectural descriptors for monastic spaces, such as “monastery” and “hermitage,” are not found as frequently in the sources as we might think. In fact, “hermitage” appears rarely, and yet it is one of the terms used repeatedly by archaeologists to describe excavated monastic structures. The conscious shift to see the Egyptian landscape through the Coptic and Greek sources can further enhance our understanding of the particularly Egyptian expression of monasticism. By examining the spatial rhetoric found in monastic literature and in documentary sources we can refine our terminology to describe Late Antique landscapes, monastic buildings, and communities.

DIVERSITY IN LANGUAGE FOR IDENTIFYING A MONASTIC SETTLEMENT

In the Coptic *Lives* of Pambo, Evagrius, Macarius of Egypt, and Macarius of Alexandria, we observe how the desertscape became a central location for monastic habitation.² These Desert Fathers lived in a desert (Coptic *šafe*) and at locations identified clearly as mountains (Coptic *toon*).³ The descriptions found in the *Lives* present a *generalized* landscape to talk about a very sacred landscape in Sketis (modern Wadi al-Natrun).⁴ The desert as described in the *Lives* is too general to reflect the *actual* desert of Sketis. The desert to the east and west of the Delta is relatively flat compared to the desert along the Nile that is bordered by steep escarpments in Middle and Upper Egypt. To identify any physical feature in the Delta as a mountain is inaccurate at best from a geophysical position, but many descriptions of Sketis’s landscape are relative to the author’s perception as he presents the land where monks reside. The wadis in the Delta do not follow the traditional definition of steep and narrow crevices or ravines; rather, they are wide and flat depressions. Small desert hills have naturally forming caves that could be converted for habitation, but they are rare in this area.⁵ The point of the stories is not to evoke an *actual* landscape, but to use spatial terms that evoke a *generalized* landscape that is specifically aimed toward religious audiences.

The desert was a literary, spatial, and rhetorical construction by monastic authors who present the desert as a divine landscape. The multifaceted aspects of the desert’s meaning is not immediately apparent to modern readers as we frequently bring our own interpretation of the “fierce desert” to mind when reading monastic sources.⁶ The Egyptian desert is a landscape that monks could actively modify, and they moved among the desert, the villages, and the borders that lay between them. The desert is therefore part of the larger environment for monastic habitation. As Goehring explains, “The presence of monks along the entirety of the continuum of spatial location between city and remote

desert seems clear ... Monks clearly occupied the entire physical landscape in Egypt, from the largest city to the furthest desert.”⁷ Similarly, Tim Vivian outlines the ubiquitous nature of monks in the desert and inhabited fringes of the Nile Valley. He traces how the movements of Paphnutius in Upper Egypt’s desert landscape simultaneously convey the spatial history of monastic settlement and the desert’s mystical nature. Paphnutius’s internalization of the desert, by his movements in and through the deserts, makes the topography *specific* for a monastic audience.⁸ The physicality of the *actual* desert fades in the hands of monastic authors who blur the lines between imagined and real geographies. Vivian clarifies the power of the language: “Desert and mountain have the same meaning ... both geographical and mystical ... We are in a mystical landscape, where meaning is found not in heat and cold and the coarseness of terrain but in the interior geography of the human soul and its relationship with God.”⁹ The geographic language is multitextured. On the one hand, the sources speak to a history of settlement in real deserts in physical, known spaces for monastic and nonmonastic audiences – the sources reflect a particular, specific Egyptian landscape. However, on further scrutiny, the duality of meaning emerges as the actual or specific language evolves into a generalized language in which the deserts are mystical, imagined, and internal.

Sifting through the epigraphic and documentary sources for evidence of the emotional tie monastics had to the spaces in which they lived is a difficult task for two reasons. First, the study of emotions in archaeology and in antiquity is a relatively new endeavor and one fraught with limitations. Developing sound methodologies for interpreting emotions and locating them in the physical and textual sources requires a sophisticated theoretical approach to place the modern historian into the lived experience and perception of Late Antique individuals.¹⁰ Second, the written evidence is already selective due to what has been preserved and also discovered.¹¹ For example, legal documents share formulaic language that expresses the needs of the grantor and grantee, with little reflection of the human regard for property and land. Cells and monasteries are established, inherited, and remodeled. But the reaction of owners or occupants to a particular construction is beyond the scope of the texts. Individual correspondence, which may reflect more personal feelings about the built environment, mention a place or land usually in relationship to agricultural production or the place of residency. Rarely is there a reflection on the state of a building or a monastic construction project. Inscribed graffiti and painted dipinti, placed on walls of cells, in courtyards, along footpaths, and in repurposed caves, can record invocations for protection for an inhabitant, but they do not list the process of remodeling or detail the occupants’ regard for the final form of the new shelter. Still, the emotive qualities of buildings *do* appear in the monastic literature for spiritual edification. In this context of hagiographic and didactic literature, we read of the ways in which the physical world is transformed by

monastic dwellings. Despite the limitations of the sources for reconstructing a sense of monastic space and place, Coptic and Greek sources provide a valuable window into the spatial discourse of how monastics and nonmonastics perceived the natural world and how monastic settlements fit into that landscape. By examining the terms Late Antique authors used, such as “monastery” and “desert,” we can trace the rhetorical development of monastic spatial language and examine how monastic authors sought to imbue their “rooms,” “dwelling places,” and “places” with a uniquely monastic connotation. The same terms are used by nonmonastic authors, indicating that there is a degree of fluidity that will assist us in appreciating how both lay and monastic communities understood the presence of monastic space in the Egyptian landscape.

Monastic and nonmonastic writers drew on a wide array of terms to classify monastic settlements and their location in the landscape, thus indicating that one term was not more normative than another.¹² The Greek *monastērion* derives from the word *monachos* for “one who is alone,” and authors adopt the word in numerous texts to identify a monastic community. *Monastērion* is often linked to a founder or patron such as the *Monastērion* of Apa Thomas, the *Monastērion* of Apa Apollo, and the *Monastērion* of Gaios.¹³ Despite the use of *monastērion*, Late Antique authors also preferred a wide range of ancient Egyptian and Greek terms to identify a site as a monastic settlement, thus indicating that *monastērion* was neither an exclusive nor a privileged term initially. Mountain (*toou*/Gk. *oros*),¹⁴ rock (Coptic/Gk. *petra*), place (*ma* and Coptic/Gk. *topos*),¹⁵ assemblage (*soouhs*/Gk. *ekklesia*),¹⁶ community (*heneete*/Gk. *koinobion*),¹⁷ a group of people (*auēt*),¹⁸ and laura (Coptic/Gk. *laura*)¹⁹ all appear in a variety of sources to indicate the presence of a monastic community. Often these various terms are transferred into modern translations simply as “monastery,” which diminishes the rich variation in vocabulary.²⁰ Since many of these terms bear specific connotations it is worth looking at the nuance that is lost in making all the terms equivalents for monastery.

First, writers adopted a wide array of geophysical terms to describe a monastic settlement and thus consciously evoked biblical topography or religious geography in speaking about mountains, rocks, and deserts.²¹ Coptic *toou* and Greco-Coptic *petra*²² both reflect their geophysical qualities of mountain and rock, respectively, but they also can mean a monastic settlement. By using “mountain” (*toou* or the Greek loan word *oros*), writers identify either a monastic *place*, meaning the physical area, or a monastic entity with the expressed idea of the community as a whole.²³ The use of both *toou* and *oros* to refer to a monastic settlement demonstrates the inseparable nature of geographical and topographical terms with the monastic settlement, regardless of the community’s size.²⁴ For example, the “*Tōou* of Phoou” appears in an eighth-century monastic letter from Keri.²⁵ The “Mountain of Phoou” is a monastic community, based on the content of the letter, but it also has a name

that links it to its geophysical location as part of the outer desert where the various “mountains” create the physical border between the inhabited land and the inner desert that lay to the west and east. The preference for “mountain” persisted in the post-conquest period, when *jabal* (Ar. “mountain”) carried the same monastic connotations.

Several examples illustrate the frequent use of “mountain” to refer to monastic communities. A funerary epitaph references the “holy mountain (*toou*) of Apa Shenoute the archimandrite,” meaning the monastery of Apa Shenoute.²⁶ An increase in the population density in the desert cliffs led to a shift in how “mountain” was understood by monastic authors. When Apa Apollo fled from Pbow to escape unorthodox teachings, he settled at a location within a mountain (*toou*) in the north. The *toou* was then permanently modified to contain his dwelling place (*manshōpe*) and the community that sprang from this place was then known as the *Monastērion* of Apa Isaac.²⁷

Second, another term frequently employed to reference the entirety of a monastic community is *topos*, meaning *place*, and is a direct loan word from Greek. *Ma* also means “place,” but *topos* is clearly the preferred term for use in nomenclature for a monastic settlement.²⁸ *Topos* seems to be more specific for a settlement, whereas *ma* is more generally any “place.” While *topos* was used first to identify administrative or geographic regions that were smaller in size between nomes and villages, the term takes on broader meanings in the Roman period.²⁹ In the fourth century, the term appears in legal accounts at Oxyrhynchus (*PSI V* 467), Hermopolis (*P.Lips.* 17), and Heracleopolis (*P. Cornell* inv. II 43) to refer to the division of a house as a *topos* for individual sale.³⁰ In Etienne Bernand’s analysis of *topos* in Greek epigraphic sources from Egypt, he concludes there was an enormous range of situations in which “place” was appropriate for meaning a physical place, a building, a sanctuary, a commercial location, or a geographical location.³¹ The term is therefore flexible for use in a variety of settings. *Topos* could refer to rooms, or spaces, in a generic sense, while it also bears a sense of sacredness in descriptions of religious geography.³² For example, when Roman travelers visited Dayr al-Madinah in Thebes, they left Greek graffiti accounts for they were “in the presence of the great gods in the holy mountain” and in the “holy place (*topos*) in the presence of all the gods.”³³ Dominic Montserrat and Lynn Meskell interpret these records of travel as “a very real emotional investment in the environment. Not only did the visitors and pilgrims make a physical deference to the gods, named or unnamed, that they perceived there, but they also need to take the time to inscribe a permanent record of their feelings in the correct ritual wording.”³⁴ While not all travelers to Thebes were motivated by religious objectives, some certainly were and they recognized a sacredness to the spaces of the pharaonic age without necessarily needing knowledge of the inscribed Egyptian texts on the walls of the temples.

Nearly 600 years later, villagers from Byzantine Jeme, living in the modified ruins of Medinet Habu, also used *topos* to refer to their place of habitation, thus indicating that *topos* continued to be used as term to designate any place.³⁵ It appears frequently in the legal documents from archives of Jeme by which individuals agreed to a formulaic oath “by this (holy) place” to not be duplicitous in their legal actions.³⁶ The Coptic foundation grant of the *topos* of Apa Phoibammon, located on the west bank in Thebes amid Queen Hatshepsut’s mortuary temple of Dayr al-Bahri, effectively illustrates the use of *topos* for outlining a settlement in the late sixth century. The village grants sole legal ownership to the monks at the settlement. The text reads:

You [pl.] are owners of the whole *topos* of Apa Phoibammon, so as to dwell in it, build on it or pull it down, or receive men to yourselves there, anyone who will walk in the fear of God from the whole of time of your life and of the one you shall assign to the *topos* after you to serve it in the work of charity to the poor. And no man is to be able to [transgress this] ...And we all together have established this document.³⁷

The legal document identifies the *topos* with the physical site of Apa Phoibammon’s community. Several monastic communities also existed in the same landscape of Thebes and were also called *topos*.³⁸ In a sixth-century letter from Aphrodito, Dioscorus uses a series of Greek expressions to describe a monastic settlement in the desert (*eremos*) including *monastērion*, holy place (*topos*), mountain (*oros*), and a less commonly used expression, “the pure house” (*oikos*).³⁹ Dioscorus’s writings thus exhibit the fluidity of the vocabulary at a writer’s disposal and he identifies a wide range of general and geophysical terms with the addition of a less utilized description of the “pure house.”

Arietta Papaconstantinou explains within the religious topography of Byzantine Egypt how *topos* was used to identify a monk’s shrine or tomb.⁴⁰ Within funerary contexts, monastic commemorative stelae use *topos* as a designator for burial places. For example, Ama Rachel’s death is commemorated in a room at the Monastery of Apa Jeremias at Saqqara in which her soul will be “in the *topoi* where she is.”⁴¹ The use of *topoi* suggests a funerary context and not a set of rooms.⁴² It may therefore reflect a preference for the term to reflect specific settlements located in the former pharaonic necropolis. The term is also attested in numerous monastic sources to mean the holy residence of monks within the desert and the edges of the cultivated lands.⁴³ Papaconstantinou demonstrates that the use of *topos* is more frequently found in later Coptic documents and appears more frequently in southern Egypt; its usage may reflect regional preferences.⁴⁴ However, *topos* cannot be thought of as an exclusively desert appellation, or tied only to the mortuary landscape.

A third group of terms (*heneete*, *soouhs*, *laura*, *sunagōgē*, and *monastērion*) bear the connotation of assemblies, districts, and collections of individuals in a built

environment or a geographical space. The Coptic noun *heneete* is used by many authors and derives from the ancient Egyptian word for house or temple (*ḥwt* and *ḥwt-ntr*).⁴⁵ *Heneete* is therefore a uniquely Egyptian, and thereby Coptic, expression for a monastic settlement and was used throughout the Late Antique and medieval periods.⁴⁶ As Armand Veilleux explains, “[S]ome Pachomian documents in Coptic usually reserve the word ‘monastery’ (*monastērion*) to those non-Pachomian communities, using the Coptic words *soouhs* and *heneete* for the communities or monasteries of Pachomius.”⁴⁷ The regional nature of the Pachomian material may surface here in word choice. In the eighth century, the term is still used to designate a monastic community, *Heneete of Stephen*, and appears in the monastic letters from Bawit.⁴⁸

Upper Egyptian monastic authors, such as Shenoute and Besa, use *heneete* in addition to other terms (*soouhs* and *koinobion*) to refer to monastic built environments. Bentley Layton explains how Shenoute employs a wide range of terms such as “congregation” (*sunagōgē*), “these abodes” (*neitopos*), and “monastery” (*heneete*) to speak to “both human social institution (‘community’) and physical entity (‘coenobium’)” of the monastic spaces under his authority.⁴⁹ Besa does not use *monastērion* when speaking of the monastery, but instead prefers *topos*, *sunagōgē*, *ma*, and *toou*.⁵⁰ The words have different associations such that *sunagōgē* appears more often to relate to the broader collection of the monasteries, such as the Pachomian and Shenoutian monastic federations, but is not used to describe independent communities found elsewhere in Egypt. In the later seventh-century letters from Jeme, a scribe uses both *heneete* and *monastērion* in the same document when speaking about the Monastery of Apa Paulos. He does not use *toou* because the monastery is located “on the mount (*toou*) of the Kastron of Jeme:” thus he differentiates between the geophysical feature (*toou*) and its topographical place and the physical community (*heneete* and *monestērion*).⁵¹

Like *heneete*, Coptic *soouhs* was also used to describe monastic settlements and in particular those communities associated with Upper Egyptian Pachomian sites.⁵² More frequently these sites were called *koinonia*, being made up of individual houses (*ēi*/Gk. *oikos*). The language is regional, for it reflects the very specific organization of some Upper Egyptian monasteries, whereas the use of *soouhs*, *heneete*, and *laura* reflects a variety of different monastic settings throughout the Nile Valley from the Delta to Aswan.

The review of the language used to describe Late Antique monastic communities illustrates the great regional and local diversity used by monastic authors. The natural topography has importance for situating settlements within a diverse physical landscape. The monastic archival material that we have reflects best the situation of settlements built in the areas on the fringes of the cultivated fields and in the liminal space of the outer desert that marked

the boundaries of the inhabited land. Examining this body of evidence will further elucidate the diversity in terminology found in monastic literature.

WITHIN THE MONASTIC SETTLEMENT

Once inside the physical environs of the monastic settlement, we encounter the actual buildings of the community – the spaces in which monks lived and work. A survey of the architectural terms used by monastic authors to describe their built environments demonstrates the direct similarity between nonmonastic and monastic architectural vocabulary. Although numerous points of linguistic continuity exist in how monastic and lay authors describe the built environment, three terms in particular – *house*, *dwelling place*, and *cell* – require review.

The Coptic term for house or home is *ēi* (Gk. *oikos* or *dōma*). *Ēi* and *oikos* (or *oikia*) refer to homes in many nonmonastic contexts, such as those found in deeds. For example, in the sixth-century archive of Patermouthis we read of various parts of houses for sale.⁵³ Maria, a nun, wrote to anchorite Kyriakos desiring his blessing on her house (*ēi*) and for her monastic discipline.⁵⁴ A house, *ēi*, like Maria's, could be divided up for sale, purchased, and inherited. An individual room, Coptic *ri*, within a house could also be sold, inherited, or built onto or into an existing house. "House" appears most often in reference to the description of *oikomenos*, or "house manager," in Pachomian and Shenoutian settlements. The term reflects the managerial divisions within the monastic community. *Oikos* therefore was a central point of monastic institutional organization in the Upper Egyptian monasteries. A monastic deed from eighth-century Thebes grants property to the *Tōpos* of Apa Pisenthius, a monastic community, by the descendants of a local landowner. The bequeathed property is known by its location relative to other properties. On the north of the property is the house (*ēi*) of Isaac and Pekōsh, on the east is the house (*ēi*) of Konstantinos, on the south is a path, and on the west is another house.⁵⁵ Here we observe how Late Antique space was conceptualized by both experience with house ownership (such as monuments) and by routes of travel (such as pathways through the landscape).

The second term used to describe monastic buildings is "dwelling place" and is apparently preferred by writers over the use of *ēi* or *oikos*. While *ēi* is used most often to describe nonmonastic domestic spaces, the phrase *manshōpe* literally means "to become a place" and is often then translated as "dwelling place" or "residence," and means a monastic domestic dwelling.⁵⁶ It appears later in Arabic sources as *manshubiya* to refer to monastic dwellings. "Dwelling places" are found *within* larger spatial designations of communities (such as *monestērion*, *toou*, *topos*, *heneete*, or *petra*). The "dwelling place" is therefore not

used to signify a particular monastic community, but rather as a space inside a *toou* or *topos*. The appellation appears in many contexts in which the phrase has the meaning of a place of residence, but not necessarily carrying the connotation of a specific *type* of building or structure.⁵⁷

Dipinti from monastic sites also illustrate the importance of nuanced nomenclature for monastic buildings. A dipinto from room 1724 at the Monastery of Apa Jeremias introduces Papa Pisente, a deacon and “father of the dwelling place” (*piōt npimanshōpe*).⁵⁸ In his commentary, H. Thompson argues, based on his assessment of the archaeological evidence for the community, that the dwelling place is “not the whole monastery, but probably the double row of monk’s cells.”⁵⁹ At both Bawit and Kellia, “dwelling place” occurs in dipinti in painted niches of monastic residences. *I. Bawit II.1*, on the east wall of a residence, asks for God and the Theotokos to keep or protect the inhabitant of the dwelling place.⁶⁰ *Manshōpe* also conveys ownership of a particular structure by monks, such as the “dwelling place of Apa Apollo” and “those belonging to this dwelling place.”⁶¹ At the monastic settlement at Kellia, multiroomed buildings include numerous dipinti from which we can learn about the religious practices of the monks and how they engaged with the spaces in which they lived.⁶² The settlements span a range from the late fourth to ninth centuries. In QR 195 excavators recorded 155 inscriptions, primarily dipinti, covering the walls the residence reflecting the interactions between individuals who lived in the buildings and visitors to the community. In the end, “dwelling place” is the only phrase to appear as a physical description of building QR 195.⁶³ Elsewhere at Kellia, QR 306, which was occupied up until the mid-eighth century, shows the frequent use of the phrase “dwelling place” in different contexts. A red dipinto is especially interesting for how it explicitly warns that if a single object is taken from the “dwelling place” the culprit will be cursed and separated from Christ forever.⁶⁴ In another room, a monk addresses those who come into his dwelling place to pray,⁶⁵ and in a second dipinto, Joseph and brother Aphu, possibly one-time owners of the rooms, ask for mercy from those who enter into their dwelling place to pray.⁶⁶

The last term used to describe monastic spatial configurations is *ri* – a room or cell. It refers to the innermost area of a building to address the physical divisions within a *ēi* or *manshōpe*. *Ri* (Gk. *kellion*) refers to a space within a house or building.⁶⁷ It can be a small cupboard under the stairs, a room in a house, or even a jail cell. It is often interchangeable with the more generic meaning of “place” (*ma*).⁶⁸ *Ri* occurs in both monastic and nonmonastic legal texts in outlining how a room is sold, inherited, or repaired. *Ri* is used not only for monastic spaces but also appears frequently in several nonmonastic papyri to describe specific rooms sold or inherited. Within a monastic context it is typically translated as *cell* and not as *room*, in the general sense. The reasons for this reading are directly tied to the specific actions that are performed within

the space, for the “cell” takes on characteristics that seem to be fundamentally different in their nature than activities that would happen in a nonmonastic “room.”⁶⁹

“Room” or “cell” appears in epigraphic sources, thus offering another avenue for considering the spatial meaning of the term. In a graffito at the Monastery of Apa Jeremias, Papa Colluthus is given the title of “he who belongs to the cell (*ri*) of the Apa.”⁷⁰ The title may refer to the actual cell of the founder Apa Jeremias. An inscribed limestone paver in room 773 reads: “This is the seat of Apa Jeremias.”⁷¹ Since Jeremias was the founder of the monastery, Quibell concluded that the room commemorated either where Jeremias once resided or where he literally sat and presided over the community. The title for Colluthus, as the one who “belongs to the cell of the Apa,” may mean he was responsible for the care of that room or in charge of the entire monastery. A similar expression with the title of “cell of the Apa” is also found at the Monastery of Apa Apollo in Bawit in which Apa Johannes is called “the father of the cell (*ri*) of the Apa,”⁷² along with three other monks, Gerontius, Abraham, and Mes.⁷³ Together they may bear a role as caretakers at the monastery.

Just how should we interpret these terms and their applicability to archaeological sites? Could *ri* mean the monastery as a whole? For example, in H. Thompson’s discussion of the title and its meaning, he suggests that *ri* may be associated with a particular structure and not just a room within a dwelling: “In a large monastery *ri* must have been a separate building or large room rather than a cell.”⁷⁴ Thompson does not offer any further explanation as to why he infers this meaning aside from his discussion of the title, which occurs in several different contexts at the site. Implicit in Thompson’s reasoning is his assumption that a cell must be inherently small and the space could not warrant such an important title or privilege. If *ri* is allowed to be any room and not just a diminutive space, then a title that references the “room” of a particular area of the monastery may more accurately reflect designations within the settlement. This may help explain another monk’s title. Victor, also from the Bawit, is “he who belongs to the cell (*ri*) of the children.”⁷⁵ Victor is not in charge of a monastery of the children, but rather a space in which the younger members of the community live or gather. Since children were frequently given as donations by families to monasteries, their presence was not uncommon, and certainly individual monks were given charge over the children.⁷⁶ These examples attest to the variegated nature of a “room,” ranging from an intimate space of the individual, akin to a temple for holy worship, to a communal room for the monastery’s children.

In looking at the documentary evidence for a clearer understanding of the “dwelling place” and “room,” we find ample evidence to illustrate that monks understand their domestic quarters and homes as residences. When we look at personal correspondence to and from monks, prayers and graffiti placed on

residential walls, and the legal transactions that involved the exchange of ownership of property, we observe how monks described their built environments and borrowed language that worked in both religious and secular settings. The challenge is for us to consider if we, as modern readers, imbue words with meanings that they had in antiquity. The most obvious candidate for reconsideration is *ri*. What would happen to our perception of monastic settlements if we understood a “cell” as a “room” in any house or dwelling? Consider the change in meaning to talk about the Monastery of Phou if instead we are looking at the Mountain (*toou*) of Phou where Apa Moses, the Father of the Room (*ri*), lived in his dwelling place (*manshōpe*), to the west of the cave (*bēb*) of Apa Bishoi. The specificity of the language brings us closer to the ways in which monks talked about the landscape and their built environments. The next section considers this topic in greater detail and then examines legal documents to further refine what inherent value monastic spatial divisions may have had for their communities.

IDEALIZED AND ACTUAL SPACES

Context is crucial in understanding how we read the spatial terminology. On the surface a room in any building may be a room, but what would transform the room into a cell? In the case of monastic living, one could argue, as fourth-century monastic author Paul of Tamma did, that the activities of a monk within the room (*ri*) are transformative, and thus the room evolves into the cell. Here we see an example of Bachelard’s theory that individuals have the ability to transform the nature and meaning of space through private actions and beliefs. The room is not meaningless, but rather takes on value as a monastic space *because* of the actions of the individual within the space. Paul articulates the *otherness* of the room as follows: “For the incense of God is a wise man in his cell (*ri*). The altar of God is a wise man in his cell. For his cell is always filled with a sweet smell from the fruit of his good works. The glory of God will appear to him there.”⁷⁷ Paul’s description of the cell and the monk’s relationship to the space illustrates Ian Hodder’s assertion in *Reading the Past* that all material is “meaningfully constituted” and thereby transformed by human actions.⁷⁸ The challenge for us is to articulate the multiple ways in which meaning was ascribed to the rooms. Here we can see the benefits of sociological views of space and community identity presented by Bourdieu, Giddens, and Lefevre. All three suggest that practices and beliefs establish conventions that reinforce identity, both individual and communal, as we see well illustrated by Paul’s statements about the monk within the cell transforming the room into a holy *topos* – a holy place.

What made a room not a cell or vice versa? This question is an excellent illustration of the challenges inherent in ascertaining the meaning of specific

terms for the built environment and the need to examine how monastic authors configured space in their spatial discourse. The fact that monastic authors describe the cell as a unique space for monastic living sets the monastic room apart from nondomestic spaces in ways that we simply cannot find parallels to in terms of how space was understood. For example, we do not know how lay Christians practiced their devotion in their homes and whether they regarded some rooms as having a different nature than other rooms. We believe monastic cells are different in part because we are told they are by those describing monastic life.

In *The Sacred and the Profane*, Mircea Eliade provides a typology for how individuals might recognize sacred space through a variety of “techniques of orientation.”⁷⁹ For Eliade, the *axis mundi* is a feature that is divinely selected as unique and sacred without the assistance of individuals. But in Frank Brown’s assessment of Eliade’s paradigm, he suggests that Eliade offers only a very *conservative* model for sacrality. It is a model of sacrality that minimizes, if not negates entirely, the role of the artist or builder for innovation in constructing sacred meaning. Brown offers a more complex idea of the interwoven nature of place and the sacred as being “partly defined and created by material making, which also makes for a particular sense of religious identity and power.”⁸⁰ Brown, while working on the sacred meaning for religious spaces, poses important questions to highlight the role of individuals in crafting sacred spaces – along the lines of Hodder’s “meaningfully constituted” spaces – that enable us to trace how a room may be transformed into a cell.

In reviewing monastic spatial language we can formulate three questions for further investigation. First, how does the material form of the architecture shape a definition of the sacred? Does the physical configuration of the room lend itself to an inherent differentness not found elsewhere? In looking at the archaeological evidence, there is no obvious indication in the built form that the monastic residence is inherently different from other spaces. Second, how does the space create a sense of community and exclusivity? Physically speaking the separateness of the entire monastic settlement offers a spatial distance and boundary between one settlement and another. According to Brown, the separateness, however small, is enough to signal that the area is of a different nature than other spaces. Did Late Antique monastics make these same kind of theoretical distinctions? Third, what role did monastic actions *within* the built environment play in constituting the space’s meaning? In exploring these questions we will see that physical space is transformed from ordinary space into sacralized space in the minds of monastic authors, although this shift leaves very little indication in the archaeological record, therefore blurring the lines between what appears to be monastic and nonmonastic space. Answers to these three questions will explain in part why the archaeological evidence of a monastic house is not significantly different from that of a nonmonastic house.

First, in considering how writers presented monastic settlements, we cannot see any distinctive elements that would make a monastic residence significantly different from a nonmonastic house. The indistinguishable nature of the built form is also apparent in the indistinguishable vocabulary used by a variety of authors. Examples from monastic literature, both in the writings of monks and hagiographies and in documentary evidence, including graffiti, dipinti, personal correspondence, and legal documents, from the fourth to the ninth centuries, illustrate a continuity of terms from Late Antiquity in describing place and space (*ma*, *ri*, *manshōpe*, *topos*, *toou*, and *monastērion*).⁸¹

Second, there is little documentary evidence to support the notion that monastics perceived themselves as being separate, apart, or spatially distinct from those around them. Administrative documents from the Monastery of Apa Apollo at Bawit from the eighth century and from the Monastery of Apa Thomas at Wadi Sarga from the seventh and eighth centuries offer little to defend a conscious spatial division between monastic and other places. In fact, the collection and payment of taxes, the movement of goods into and from the monasteries, and the transfer and maintenance of property demonstrate that despite any topographical distance, monks were very much engaged in the economic and legal activities of Late Antique and medieval Egypt.

In one letter, *P.Bal.* 188, a monk from a monastery was apparently banished and cast out for disobeying community expectations. He writes to request admittance back into the boundaries of the monastery and specifically for the right to take up residence in his dwelling place, like everyone else.⁸² In the context of this letter, the dwelling place is a specific location within the monastery and demonstrates how the site was divided into units identified by particular dwellings known by their owner or occupant. Later legal documents from the seventh to ninth centuries record how monks situated the monastery in the larger landscape, the placement of buildings within the monastery, and their connections to the built environment.⁸³ Despite a strong sense of *place*, the spatial limits were not defined in terms of being away or distanced from nonmonastic settlements in the cultivated areas.

Third, without visible signs making monastic spaces expressly different in nature and form from other nonmonastic spaces, it is in fact the actions within the room that transform it from a room to a monastic cell. The room is multifunctional, just as rooms are in nonmonastic contexts – a room could be a place for gathering, a place to work, and a place to sleep. The difference between monastic and nonmonastic location has more to do with the individuals who form the community at the *topos* or *monastērion* or *koinonion*. The sense of community and sacrality of space is not physically apparent until we look into monastic literature and read about the transformative qualities of monastic space through one's actions and beliefs *within* the space.

This is where Paul of Tamma's writings stress the idea that the life of a monk in his *ri* is like incense offered to God in the holy Temple in Jerusalem. For this Coptic monk the room became the tabernacle of God;⁸⁴ by residing in the *ri* monk learned how to move beyond the physical world to see God: "You shall be a wise man in your cell (*ri*), building up your soul as you sit in your cell (*ri*), while glory is with you, while humility is with you, while the fear of God surrounds you day and night, while your cares are thrown down, while your soul and your thoughts watch God in astonishment, gazing at him all the days of your life."⁸⁵ The room of the monk, where he spends his time with God, is not an oratory or anything more unusual, but it appears that the actions or performances carried out within the room transform it into something more – it becomes now the room of a monk. This transformation may reflect more of the theological reflections by monastic authors rather than a widespread perception that the room, or cell, was an essentially different space. Legal documents offer a unique body of material to observe the selling, dividing, and renting of monastic property and if it was different because of the actions of the monks. Did monks sell their incensed tabernacles?

LEGAL SPATIAL CONFIGURATIONS

Accounts of monastic landholding offer additional insight into how monastic communities envisioned their relationship to space, to the community, and to others.⁸⁶ For example, the papyri from several sites demonstrate that monks owned property, were agents of legal and economic disputes about landholdings, and established wills to regulate the ownership of their property.⁸⁷ As Daniel Caner has observed, the rhetorical production of monastic poverty was in fact flexible enough to accommodate a wide spectrum of needs for the individual monk and the monastery's obligation to the wider community.⁸⁸ It is therefore not inconsistent for monastics to own property and to engage in the leasing or transfer of it.

A comparison of legal documents for the sale and inheritance of property in both a monastery and lay community demonstrates the commonality of the language used to describe actual buildings and property.⁸⁹ By the Late Antique period, the Upper Egyptian region of Thebes was home to a vast array of small monastic communities and the town of Jeme (see Fig. 32).⁹⁰ We are fortunate to have a diverse collection of secular and monastic archives from the area that demonstrate how spaces were divided and viewed by their owners.⁹¹ *P.CLT* 7 is a seventh-century deed of sale from Jeme in which Mena sold his single room (*ri*) to two men, Severos and Daniel.⁹² The room is clearly stated as being within the house (*ēi*) of Paham Soch and its exact location is given as being south of a specific staircase (*tōrt*). In another source from Jeme, the division of Maria's property is outlined in a deed granting the property to her daughter,



32. Remains of the mud brick buildings of the Late Antique town of Jeme at Medinet Habu in Thebes, Egypt.

Elizabeth, and her granddaughter, Abigaia. The division of space and physical movement into and out of the various floors and hallways is particularly illustrative of the ways that houses were divided between individuals. The text begins with a mutual recognition that the property will be divided and then outlines which parts belong to Elizabeth:

Since at this time we agreed unanimously among ourselves to divide the house (*ēi*) of our deceased one among ourselves in this manner ... You (Elizabeth) have received the room beneath the stairs and the room (*ri*) whose door opens north onto the stairs, and you control the whole veranda, whose door opens north onto the stairs, and the entire grain storage area, which is above the veranda, up to the top. As for the one who wants to build, it is his [*sic*] to the limit, and he can bring his staircase up to his portion. The outer door, the foyer, the water-holder, and the stairway were common areas between us, unless building is carried out on the house (*ēi*): if building is done, then each one will bring his staircase to his portion, in such a way that we are each satisfied with the two portion. (*PKRU* 35.22–38)⁹³

This deed articulates physical spaces in specific detail stating that the house can be extended or repaired as needed, though such actions would require further

documentation. In the deed we are reminded that spaces can and were divided in ways that may not be apparent to us immediately through the archaeological record.⁹⁴ The addition of later walls, for example, may signal changes in ownership and reallocation of spaces for new activities. Therefore the documentary evidence provides a reminder that even if excavators deem a house as a single unit of occupation through the drawing of a site plan, wills reveal how spaces were modified based on changes in relationships and the granting of portions of real estate. Reading the archaeology and the texts together, there may, in fact, be several separate households within a building, with each room being owned or inherited by unrelated individuals. With the legal documents and the archaeological evidence of the residences at Jeme we are well positioned to examine the texts and physical remains together and observe the features of the built environment.

What do monastic legal documents offer for insight into how monastic spaces were viewed? How do the deeds, leases, and bills of sale compare with nonmonastic examples? A seventh-century will (*P.KRU* 75) is a testament by the monk Jacob, who lived at the Monastery of Epiphanius. The testament grants monastic lands he owns to a fellow monastic Elias, and should Elias die before Jacob, the lands should go to Stephen, another monk.⁹⁵ Elias, Stephen, and Jacob were all residents of a community called the *Topos* of Epiphanius,⁹⁶ not a monastery, and Jacob's residence was a modest affair, nestled in and among the abandoned pharaonic tombs of a Middle Kingdom nobleman. The *topos* was one of many in the general vicinity, as the ostraca and papyri from the settlement attest.⁹⁷ For example, Severus lived at the *Topos* of Apa John in the Desert;⁹⁸ Mark was priest of the *Topos* of Saint Mark, the Evangelist, in the *Toou* of Jeme;⁹⁹ and the *Topos* of Apa Pseynthios (Pisentius) received a donation from a local family.¹⁰⁰ The size of the *topoi* is not provided, but the archaeological evidence for the known sites with the appellation *topos* demonstrates that there is no correlation between a settlement's size and the designation.¹⁰¹

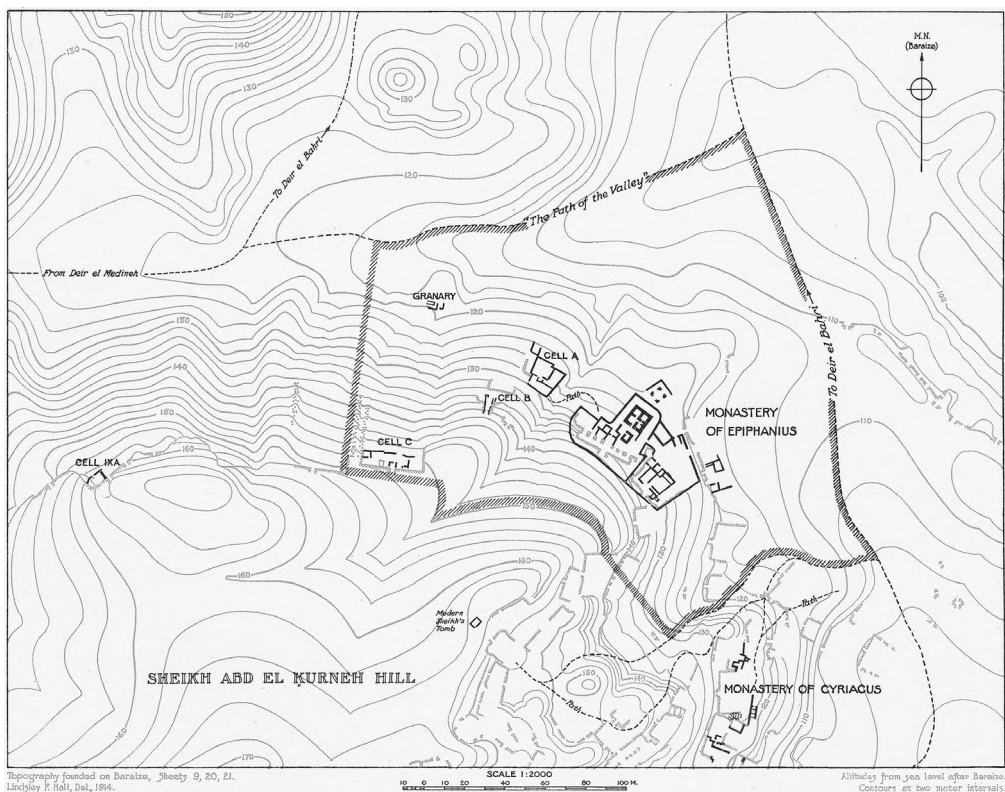
Jacob's will describes the property explicitly and thus offers "an excellent view of the topography in the seventh century."¹⁰² Jacob outlines the property that he legally inherited as "the dwelling places, namely the caves (*bēb*) and the tower (*purgos*/Gk. *pyrgos*), from the road that goes to Saint Phoibammon, to the road that goes to the cave of those whose remembrance is among the holy ones, Apa Abraham and Apa Ammonios, the men of Esne, and to the road of the valley (*eia*) and up to the hill (*bounos*/Gk. *bounos*) that is above the said caves and tower."¹⁰³ A subsequent stipulation within the will forbids Jacob from removing Elias from the *Topos* until his natural death. Once Elias has the property, after Jacob's death, his family is not permitted to seize the land and its dwellings, but rather he must make a formal agreement for another monastic to have the right to the lands. Therefore, this will is drawn up by Jacob and

Elias jointly to establish the line of inheritors for all the monastic dwelling places and all the material goods within the caves.

The language used to describe the landscape is very important. *Bēb*, or cave, demonstrates that the monks did not regard the tombs they had modified as tombs any longer. Now they were caves and they were known as the dwelling places for their community. To further articulate the placement of the dwelling places of the *topos*, the will contains specific points of reference. Jacob states clearly that the dwelling places, namely the caves, were built by Epiphanius and Psan, with Jacob's help in the *toou* of Jeme. In a second description of the parcel of land, the *topos* is demarcated by roads "from the road (*hiē*) that goes to Saint Phoebammon [another monastic settlement built on the terraces of Pharaoh Hatshepsut's mortuary temple at Deir el-Bahri] to the road that goes to the cave (*bēb*)," pathways "up to the road of the valley (*eia*) and up to the hill (*bounos*) that is above the caves and the tower," and visual markers such as the holy remains of Apa Epiphanius that "lie now in the *topos*."¹⁰⁴ The specific language here casts a Late Antique perspective that accounts for far more territory than what was excavated by Winlock and shown in his plan of the site (see Fig. 33).

Further downriver at a monastic settlement at Bawit in Middle Egypt, Isak formally relinquished one of his two properties to the *diakon* of the "Monastery (*monastērion*) of the *Topos* of Apa Apollo."¹⁰⁵ His use of both terms suggests that there could be a further refinement in what distinguishes a *monastērion* from a *topos*. His contract is part of a larger monastic archive from Bawit that had at least three named archivists recorded at the monastery.¹⁰⁶ The rich corpus of ostraca and papyri from this region, along with the excavated remains of one of the monasteries of Apa Apollo at Bawit, offer an excellent opportunity to bring together the physical built environment with the hagiographic tradition and the documentary evidence.¹⁰⁷ Isak expresses concern that he could not properly manage both properties, which are simply called *ma*. The property does not have a house or dwelling, but does have a cistern (Gk. *limnē*).¹⁰⁸ In Sarah Clackson's examination of the papyri from Bawit, she demonstrates that the settlement was identified by various names. Numerous examples exist within the texts describing the *Topos* of Apa Apollo, the *Monastērion* of Apa Apollo, Apa Apollo on the *Toou* of Titkooh, and in one case the monastery is only *ma*.¹⁰⁹ Even one of the largest monastic settlements known to us could be referred to by a range of names and descriptors.

Five legal contracts from the ninth-century monastic community of Abba Apollo share numerous similarities in structure and language with the examples considered thus far. The documents are all about a single building and the properties adjacent to it. The contracts recount the sale and transfer of a dwelling place (*manshōpe*) over a sixteen-year period from 833 to 849.¹¹⁰ In



33. General plan of the Topos of Apa Epiphanius at Shaykh 'Abd al-Qurnah in Thebes, Egypt. The hashed line indicates the territory outlined in the Late Antique monastic will of the land that belonged to the community.

all five sales, the transactions are between monks with as many as eighteen witnesses for a single sale.¹¹¹ The property was first sold by Apa Ammonios to Joseph, the archimandrite and priest, and his brother Markos.¹¹² They sold the dwelling in 833 to Makare for 3 solidi, which were to be given to the *daikon* of the community. Ten years later, Makare agrees to sell the dwelling, but by now Makare shares ownership with three other monks: Theodore, Anoubion, and Merkourios. All four sign the contract attesting to the sale to Paul, a priest, and Peter. After five years, in 848, Paul, who is now identified as the *Oikonemos* of our father Apa Pamoun, sells the dwelling to four other monks: Shenoute, Severus, Paul, and Timothy. The four are identified in the contract as *apotactic* monks, which means monks who were associated more with urban monasticism,¹¹³ and that they are “in a single monastery.”¹¹⁴ The dwelling’s value has also decreased from 3 to 2 solidi. They only remain in the house for a year before it was sold again. The sellers involved in this transaction include Senouthios (Shenoute), priest and archimandrite of the Holy Abba Apollo, and his two brothers, Paul and Severus. Timothy does not appear in

the text, and the fifth text (BL OR. 6201) is an exact copy of the same sale with Shenoute as the seller.¹¹⁵

In all five documents the property is clearly described to create its legal and formal existence as a dwelling place (*manshōpe*). We do not learn its spatial placement in the *topos*, but the contracts provide explicit boundaries for the dwelling relative to adjacent properties. The dwelling is spatially placed within the “new workshop” (*terkasia*) of the *Topos*. Thus, we may consider this designation as an example of how the monks differentiated some areas of the monastery. The dwelling is also located near the gate of the workshop and its gate is a boundary maker for the property on the west side. The dwelling then is delimited by three other monastic properties. The property to the south is a “small yard (*ohe*) ... with necessities for the workshop.” The yard and its facilities for the unnamed workshop were owned by Brothers Johannes and Hومise, though their occupation is not recorded in the contract. Another small yard (*ohe*) lies to the north. Over the sixteen years, this property had three different owners and was divided to hold a watchtower and a *Ma*, or space, of Apa Pamoun.¹¹⁶ On the east side is another dwelling place owned in 833 by Shenoute, the fruit grower. This dwelling is specifically described as a small dwelling place (*koui manshōpe*). Its diminutive size may relate to the two small yards that surround the dwelling place being sold and reflect a relative spatial assessment of the properties. In the year 843 the small dwelling place was owned by Markos and in 849 his property was called a “small yard,” like the property on the south. No further details are offered about the structures on these properties.

The central dwelling, in contrast, is described in more detail. In each of the contracts, the new owners are given the right to the property both in its horizontal extent, to the other properties that form its boundaries, and in its vertical extent. The vertical dimensions begin with the roofs of the dwelling, to the ground, and finally to the cellars beneath: “You are the owner of this dwelling ... down to the ground, of (it and) its churches, its vaulted cellars, its inner chambers, its roofs with every right over it.”¹¹⁷ In the first two contracts, in 833 and 843, the structural components remain the same and the dwelling was valued at three solidi. In 848, however, the price drops to two solidi and the vertical parameters of the dwelling also change. The dwelling no longer has a church or reference to the “inner chambers.” It is likely that the building’s interior was significantly altered in the five years after 843. The 848 contract includes the right for the four brothers to build on the property or demolish the dwelling place.¹¹⁸ Stauros, Sousinnios, and Phoibamo are told: “Should you wish to build on it in any building operation, no man shall be able to sue you over it.”¹¹⁹ The contracts clearly outline the height, depth, and width of the monastic space in question, thus providing an architectural plan of the residence. These contracts, along with other legal documents, outline the physical

parameters of the monastic landscape in geophysical terms and define the built environment in relationship to the residences and work areas of other monastics.

What do we learn about property and ownership of built environments in the ninth century? The central dwelling changed hands six times over a minimum of sixteen years. The owners could be single individuals or a group, as many as four in this case. In three cases, an owner was a priest and an archimandrite or *oikonomos* of a community, but not the same ones. Of the four properties in the area of the workshop, four individuals had sole ownership over a property; yards and buildings changed ownership nine times; and only one property stayed in the hands of the same owners. In all cases, the buildings and lots were known by the name of the owner, either current or previous. Monastic buildings, like the monastic *topos*, had genealogies, and knowing this allowed monks to claim property and establish some attachment to the built environments. If owners died, the contracts included a clause that is clearly a law of the community: the *diakonia* shall assume ownership of the dwelling place and no member of anyone's family may lay claim to the property. Therefore, the monastery ultimately owns all the property within the *topos* and gains the financial profit from the sale of monastic buildings within its jurisdiction, unless a contract exists to the contrary.

CONCLUSION

Legal contracts, personal correspondence, hagiographies, graffiti, and dipinti all offer insight into how monastic communities talked about the actual desert landscape and the emplacement of the monastic built environment into that landscape. Visual evidence is sparse and offers little assistance in refining the literary accounts of monastic settlement in Egypt. Wall paintings from monastic sites, wooden lintels, portable icons, and painted pottery provide only scant indications of any geographical space or emplacement of buildings in a landscape. The monk and the monastery, therefore, are not grafted into an actualized landscape that is reproduced visually for consumption and replication by the community and is not available to us as modern interpreters of the past. Rather, monks helped shape and reproduce a uniquely monastic landscape understood in oral, hagiographical, and written traditions. The religious geography was shaped by biblical and monastic literature. Read together, these sources create a history of how places became monastic spaces. The earliest settlements were located in a desert or a mountain locale. These settlements ranged in size and were often called *topoi*, which draws on earlier connotations of sacred places in pre-Christian religious landscapes. Within the *topos*, monastics built a dwelling place, as distinct from a house (*oikos*), and this multiroomed structure could

be bought, sold, and modified. And just like in the nonmonastic world, individuals could own property and strict legal procedures monitored the transfer of property through inheritance and sale. With this foundation in the reality of monastic built environments, it is time to shift to the perspective of monastic authors as they crafted a very generalized landscape that was shaped by divine actors. In doing so, I will highlight the clear differences between the actual landscape and the monastic mindscape that would come to dominate the modern perception of monasticism and silence the documentary voices of Late Antiquity.

FIVE

TELLING STORIES ABOUT THE EGYPTIAN MONASTIC LANDSCAPE

THIS CHAPTER IS ABOUT STORIES AND THE PERCEPTION OF THE MONASTIC landscape created by stories – stories told about famous monastic leaders and famous places, and stories told about communities to create identity. But more importantly, it is about the stories of the Egyptian desert embedded within the Late Antique hagiographies that gave meaning to the stories about leaders, places, and community.

Aside from the fact that it makes up the majority of Egypt's natural landscape, the desert was a central component of ancient Egyptian and Christian theology. The nature of the desert as both a positive and a negative space for spiritual encounters is rooted in ancient pharaonic thought. Before the introduction of Christianity, Egyptians conceived of the desert (*dšrt*) as the realm both of evil gods, such as Seth, and of the sacred.¹ As early as the Old Kingdom (2686–2181 BCE),² the land for the dead was associated with the sacred or segregated land (*t3 dšr*) and was always located in the desert cliffs that hug the cultivated land below.³ The western bank of the Nile in particular was associated with the land of the deceased. From this space, the deceased could move into the afterworld.⁴ Despite the fact that the desert has an important place in the religious topography of ancient Egypt, sedentary populations throughout antiquity did not elect to inhabit the desertscape. Family members often visited tombs to make offerings to the spirits of their relatives, but they never lived alongside the tombs.⁵ A few individuals did reside in the desert, but this was linked to their occupations, such as quarrymen and miners, tomb builders,

soldiers on outposts, caravan drivers, and nomads who elected to call the desert their home. In all cases, those living in the desert were only temporary residents. They lived in natural caves, older abandoned tombs, and even the quarries they were cutting for just so long as the job required.⁶ Yet, monastic stories created a desert that was devoid of the presence of these others and did not recount their narratives. For the conquest of the desert was a story of triumphal occupation by monks, like Antony: “Indeed it was only in the loneliness of this environment, devoid of life and its quiet hardship, that the naked ascetic mind, emptied of all vain images, could attain true spirituality.”⁷

This chapter examines Egyptian monastic space in the broadest of terms from the imagined landscape of foundation narratives found in the hagiographic tradition linked to five famous monastic sites. Three were locations well known to monastic communities within the Mediterranean worlds of Byzantium and western medieval Europe. Two were known only within Egypt, and yet they were two of the largest and most important for Egyptian monasticism. Read together, the stories of these communities demonstrate how monastic authors spoke of the land, its suitability for spiritual living, and how founders laid claim to the land for monastic habitation. The sites of Wadi al-Natrun and Kellia in the Delta, Bawit in Middle Egypt, and the sites around Tabennesi and Sohag in Upper Egypt offer rich stories for analyzing how monastic authors described the environment and the need to build in locations not previously inhabited. I use these five examples to illustrate the rhetorical strategies utilized by monastic elites to construct a particular perception of the monastic mindscape that would come to define monastic literature for centuries to follow. But in order to understand how the stories of relocation and occupation developed, we begin by exploring why monastic communities moved to the fringes and how they were part of a longer tradition of moving outside of the city to inhabit new landscapes.

THE IMPULSE TO MOVE TO THE FRINGES

The desert is an important spiritual realm in biblical topography and naturally expanded into monastic teaching as a land both terrifying and beautiful.⁸ Both the Old and New Testaments contain references to the desert as a space conducive for powerful spiritual encounters – both positive and negative. For the Hebrews, the desert was a space of punishment for forty years. The environmental challenges of the landscape provided all the necessary tools for teaching the Hebrews to rely on God. In the New Testament, the author of *Hebrews* evokes the bleakness of the desert when describing the prophets and their suffering as they “wandered in deserts and mountains, living in caves and in holes in the ground” (Heb. 11:38).⁹ Despite these harsh and punitive qualities, other biblical writers described positive and protective elements of the desert

for those called to God's service. For example, David and his men successfully eluded Saul in several deserts (1 Sam. 23, 24); later Elijah lived in the Judean desert, fed by ravens sent by God (1 Kings 17); and gospel accounts tell of John the Baptist living and preaching in the desert of Judea, subsisting on locusts and honey (Matt. 3:1–4).

The most powerful biblical image of the desert is found the temptation of Jesus (Matt. 4:1; Luke 8:29). With this story the desert is both a teacher and a facilitator for encounters with the spiritual realm. It is in the desert that Jesus meets the devil, and we have the fullest development of the desert as the home of demonic beings. Although the desert could be used for God's ultimate purpose for training and protection, it was clearly also the residence of creatures opposed to God or those removed from God's care (Lev. 17:17; Isa 13:21; 34:14; Matt 12:43).¹⁰ Jesus consciously and deliberately left his community to enter into a space that would provide the appropriate conditions for fasting and for prayer. The experiences of Jesus in the desert set up the model for later monastics who regard the desert as the training ground for their spiritual disciplines. The immediate encounter with the devil, who resides in the desert, allows Jesus to employ tools for spiritual combat. He recites Scripture and affirms knowledge of his true identity, thereby deflecting Satan's temptations. Similarly, monks would regard the desert as a spiritual training ground, akin to an athletic training ground, that would force a confrontation with their own temptations and demons.¹¹ The desert provided an environment for individuals to test the depths of their desires and dedication. It became an essential part of the spiritual topography of monastic life, such that monks would seek out caves, holes, deserts, and mountains where they could hope to prove themselves worthy.

The desert was a place of temptation, but it was equally a demanding teacher: "Truly that desert leads each person into feats of asceticism, whether he wants to or not."¹² The very nature of the desert provided physical and emotional challenges, testing the resolve of individuals who wished to emulate Christ.¹³ It was not a space for the weak-willed. Sometimes the desert was used episodically for training a monk. Shenoute sent a monk to live in a cave for just under a year until the weak spirit fled from his body. On acknowledging the strange phenomenon of seeing the spirit leave, Shenoute invited the monk back into the community, who then left the desert.¹⁴ Monastic literature recounts several stories of individuals who are either turned away or required to wait a period of time before being accepted into the community. The individual was constantly tested, and many were found lacking in maturity or even practical skills needed to sustain a life in the desert. Such a life was not impossible. Numerous men elected to relocate to the desert in substantial numbers. According to Athanasius, even the devil started to feel the encroachment into his land when Antony modeled successful ascetic living. Antony's success was

so great that the devil feared Antony “would turn the desert into a city of asceticism.”¹⁵

RELOCATION TRADITIONS IN ROMAN EGYPT

The impulse to move to a new location and to embrace a new philosophical outlook was not unique to Christianity or even monasticism.¹⁶ The Mediterranean world witnessed how Cynics, Epicureans, Stoics, Neo-Platonists, and Neo-Pythagoreans all endorsed a moderate form of *askesis*, or training, that monitored the body and the mind in order to meet larger goals.¹⁷ The ultimate aim was to practice restraint in indulgences rather than to abstain entirely from the pleasures of the world. Moderation, as espoused by Plato, was a larger challenge than complete asceticism or indulgence; to practice restraint reflected one’s ability to control the body with limits.¹⁸ The mechanism for control grew from the delicate balance between controlling one’s desires and actions. The foods one ate, the amount of sex one had, and the bonds one held to another could all enhance or hinder progress in the philosophical life.¹⁹ To prepare and to train oneself was the basic meaning of *askesis* for many athletes and gladiators as well as the philosophers. They practiced in spaces with like-minded individuals and often worked at the pleasure of their trainers and sponsors. It is therefore not surprising to find monastic authors speaking about their lives as ones dedicated to philosophy and using language evocative of athletic training: “[I]f one were to call them a choir of angels or a band of athletes or a city of the pious or a new choir of seventy apostles, one would not err in appropriateness.”²⁰ Just as athletes and philosophers trained their bodies, monks trained to monitor and control their diets, sexual activity, and interactions.²¹ One essential component of this new life was the need to move to spaces with others who shared the same goal.

In Roman Egypt philosophers, athletes, and monks shared an *ascetic imperative* – a need to move away from the culture of the world and toward a culture that elevated the divine.²² In particular, the ascetic movement involved a widely held belief that particular areas should and could be set aside for religious activities. These sacred spaces were the only appropriate areas for the practice of contemplation, or the act of seeing the divine. The relationship between the divine and the individual was enhanced by the condition of the space. This belief matches well with Lefebvre’s definition of social space as a place that is altered through the ideas individuals hold about a particular space. The link between spaces with acts of contemplation was central to ascetic beliefs and behaviors. Two examples from Roman Egypt illustrate the critical importance of spatial separation for fostering spiritual living prior to the emergence of monasticism. Both provide a rhetorical context for understanding why monastics moved into the deserted regions, whether in houses in a town,

the fringes of the fields, or in the escarpments. The examples also contextualize how the generalized monastic landscape emerged in Egypt.

Porphiry (d. ca. 305) preserved an account of the old Hellenistic-Pharaonic priesthood in Egypt, as reported by Chaeremon, a first-century CE Memphite priest, in *De abstentia* 4.6–8.²³ Chaeremon's report demonstrates that observers of the practices of these priests had an awareness of the use of architectural space for spiritual living and of the necessity to be within that space for maintaining spiritual commitments.

[T]hey (the priests) chose the temples as the place to philosophize. For to live close to their temples, was fitting to their whole desire of contemplation, and it gave them security because of the reverence for the divine ... And they were able to live a quiet life ... They renounced every employment and human revenues, and devoted their whole life to contemplation and vision of the divine. Through this vision they procured for themselves honor, security, and piety; through contemplation they procured knowledge; and through both a certain esoteric and venerable way of life.²⁴

Chaeremon and Porphyry consciously linked a devotional life to philosophy. The quietude of the temple enhanced the conditions the priests desired for living a contemplative life. Residence within the temple required that the priests reject the typical forms of wage-earning that were common in the cities and towns of Roman Egypt.²⁵ They could live in quarters in the temple and dedicate their time to all spiritual matters. Chaeremon describes how participation in temple life necessitated that priests separate themselves physically from others. The physical area of the temple served as a distinctly social space for encountering like-minded individuals and for contemplating the divine. The space beyond the temple's precinct held distractions that would be detrimental to the goals of the priests for a quiet and noble life.

Similar themes for a generalized religious landscape are found in a portrait of a contemporary group of Jewish ascetics living near Alexandria and known to Philo of Alexandria (20 BCE–50 CE) as the Therapeutae.²⁶ In a short treatise called *On the Contemplative Life*, Philo describes in detail the beliefs and customs of the Therapeutae and then describes how they live.²⁷ No archaeological evidence has been found to belong to the settlement of the Therapeutae, and many scholars doubt whether it was an actual community. Despite its questionable existence, Philo's presentation contains elements of a generalized and idealized landscape that reflects ideological expectations of a well-designed life. His classification of the community as philosophers illustrates his belief that the Therapeutae were pursuing knowledge akin to other philosophical communities of the time.²⁸ Philo's account includes a thorough consideration of how daily activities were conducted in particular spaces; how these activities differed from, or were superior to, practices of urban life; and how the overall

goal of the Jewish philosophers was met only when they physically relocated to an area outside of Alexandria.

The Therapeutae originally resided throughout all of Egypt, but Philo points out that they preferred an area near Lake Mareotis, south and west of Alexandria.²⁹ Here individuals, motivated by their “longing for the deathless and blessed life,” established themselves in a new settlement.³⁰ Philo explains that the Therapeutae possess a logical rationale for relinquishing personal goods and relocating to foster their new identity: “[T]hey do not migrate into another city” for they regard the city as a place “full of turmoils and disturbances,” electing instead to live “outside the walls pursuing solitude in gardens or lonely bits of country.”³¹ Philo seeks to explain the rationale behind the belief that divesting oneself of possessions will produce a type of mental freedom from the anxieties of ownership. Philo is determined to prove that these individuals were different from those who moved aimlessly from city to city. The Therapeutae moved deliberately to free themselves from the disturbances found from living in close proximity to one’s family. The resettlement outside of Alexandria did not stem from fear but rather from a serious consideration of how to construct the proper environment for fostering the pursuit of wisdom.

According to Philo, the Therapeutae selected a variety of locations to live in, such as sites outside of walled settlements, gardens, and abandoned or deserted areas. However, these sites were not completely isolated, for they were in sight of farms and villages.³² It was in these areas that Philo says the Therapeutae pursued solitude and wisdom. He uses *eremia* (Gk.) in three distinct but related ways to convey various notions of the desert and desert places. First, *eremia* is a state of mind; second, a physical place; and third, a quality or nature of a place. In all three usages, *eremia* links ideas of solitude, wilderness, desertion, and abandonment.³³ However, these ideas do not equate to isolation, but rather to a clear separation between individuals and *other* built environments.³⁴

After moving to the new residences, the Therapeutae devised a way of living that was remarkably similar to that of later Christian ascetics.³⁵ The Therapeutae lived in simple houses to provide protection from the extreme heat of the day and cold at night.³⁶ Although Philo does not expressly state whether or not the Therapeutae built these dwellings, based on the descriptions of the activities that were carried out in these spaces, it is unlikely that they were already in existence in this area.³⁷ Philo describes the general layout to include a sanctuary (*semneion*) or monastery (*monastērion*).³⁸ The houses contained at least two rooms, if not three, with one designated as a special room for spiritual activities. The room is described as a holy or a solitary room (*monastērion*). The *monastērion*, or sacred room, existed solely for the occupant to aid in the cultivation of the memory of God.³⁹ Specifically, Philo says this space helps them be aware of God while awake and while dreaming. Within these spaces individuals prayed at appointed times, dedicated the day to the reading of Scripture, and studied

the allegorical interpretation of Scripture for hidden meanings. The obvious similarities between the practices of Philo's Therapeutae and Athanasius's Antony impressed Eusebius so much that he considered the Therapeutae as an early Christian community.⁴⁰

In the end, the two examples may not reflect actual practices of Egyptian priests or those of later Alexandrian Jewish ascetics. However, the portraits do highlight a religious and philosophical tradition about space, religious devotion, and the underutilized landscape. The desert and deserted places both in a village and on the edges of the inhabited areas became very attractive locations for monks to use as new settlements. The importance of the desert in biblical topography is clear. It is a space to confront demons, to challenge oneself, and to encounter God. Together these ideas combined to make a compelling argument for the value of the Egyptian desert as a spiritual training arena. In seeking out locations outside of the normative urban environment, monastics were part of an older tradition first started by athletes, but developed fully by Hellenistic philosophers and other religious groups that found separation beneficial to their success in reaching disciplinary goals. Monastic descriptions of the desert, their settlements, and how they selected locations for their communities reveal the complexity of ascetical spatial beliefs. The efficacy of the landscape for success in monitoring and maintaining progress was essential for every monk. As we will see, how monastics explained the value of the desert location would take on unique qualities as monastic authors crafted a narrative of the generalized desert landscape to explain the spatial value of where they lived for a spiritual existence.

DISPLACING DEMONS IN THE BYZANTINE DESERT

Monastic relocation into new areas was motivated by a shared belief that the goals of true monastic living could be best met in areas with other monks and away from societal distractions. To construct new physical environments, monastic communities articulated a message of the spiritual benefits for both monks and those who benefited from their prayers. Rather than seeking a quiet landscape, monks consciously sought battle and engagement with a *noisy* desert – a place that was occupied not by people, but by demons. Monastic authors explained why, in moving to the fringes of the occupied land, ascetics made a choice to occupy an already inhabited place populated by demons that claimed the desert as their domain.⁴¹ David Brakke's analysis of monastic–demon encounters in the desert highlights the importance of the desertscape as an area of engagement not effectively available in the urban communities: "By striking out in the desert, however, the *monachos* or 'single one' radicalized the quest for simplicity of heart and likewise intensified an ambivalence about the multiplicity of human relationships that was deeply rooted in the

late antique project of self-cultivation and particularly acute for Egyptian villagers of this period.”⁴² Monastic sites were arenas for intense spiritual activity. The battlefield imagery of the ascetic life occurs frequently in the descriptions of monks as warriors and as soldiers of Christ.⁴³ *The Sayings of the Desert Fathers* offer numerous examples of this theme, best expressed by Poemen: “If I am in a place where there are enemies, I become a soldier.”⁴⁴ The theme of military combat and occupation was an essential characteristic of what it would mean to embrace ascetic practices.

The Coptic *Life of Phib* incorporates much of the topographical language found in Late Antique documentary sources.⁴⁵ The hagiographer Papohe writes: “After all these things, we went to a mountain (*toou*) of the desert (*daie*) opposite a village (*time*) called Tahrouj. We found some holes in the rock (*petra*) there and made some small dwellings (*manšōpe*) and stayed in them and lived the monastic life with numerous ascetic practices.”⁴⁶ Despite the general nature of the terms, the steps for establishing a monastic settlement are clearly laid out and reflect Old Testament themes that were used again and again in the accounts of many monastic communities throughout the Byzantine Near East (Heb. 11:38). The desert “was a *topos* overlaid by a plethora of other *topoi*” that could be used by monastic authors to “articulate a new type of Christianity” that allowed for a Christian conquest of the landscape.⁴⁷ The landscape would then be settled and used for a new purpose.

Only monks were adequately prepared to see the demons that resided in the desert and defeat them, for the “air which is spread out between heaven and earth is so thick with spirits ... For no fleshly weariness or domestic activity or concern for daily bread ever makes them cease.”⁴⁸ Since ordinary humans were not emotionally or spiritually prepared to bear the sight of demons, it was the responsibility of ascetics to render the demons ineffective. John Chrysostom vividly represents this belief in the bravery and spiritual power of a monk in *A Comparison between a King and a Monk*: “The king alleviates poverty ... but the monk by his prayers will set free souls who are tyrannized by demons ... For prayer is to a monk what a sword is to a hunter. In fact, a sword is not so fearsome to the wolves as the prayers of the just are to the demons.”⁴⁹ Chrysostom’s analogy of the monk to a hunter provides context for Poemen’s statement that monks become spiritual swords used in battle. Monastics moved into demon-inhabited lands in order to provoke a spiritual confrontation, thereby forcing demons to concede territory to the monks. The villages “depend[ed] on the prayers of these monks as if on God himself,” for the monastic settlements provided a protective barrier around the villages.⁵⁰

Early monastic literature is clear that monastic settlements transformed the topography of Egypt both physically and spiritually. Monastic settlements adopted features that architecturally resembled clouds of earthly angels: “There is no town not surrounded by hermitages as if by walls.”⁵¹ In addition to

monastic sites located near the towns, nonmonastics were aware of other settlements in remote places and in desert caves. Mindful of the comparisons between those living in remote locations and those in the immediate vicinity of the towns, the author of the *History of the Monks in Egypt* states that “those living near towns or villages ma[d]e equal efforts, though evil troubles them on every side, in case they should be considered inferior to their remoter brethren.”⁵² Both groups of ascetics were vital for establishing the proper balance in the world.

The reclamation of the desert for habitation is a powerful image first introduced by Athanasius (296–373) in his *Life of Antony*.⁵³ For Athanasius, an urban bishop living in Alexandria, the movement of men into the fringes of the inhabited land in the fourth century reflected a conscious choice to establish a heavenly city dedicated to God: “[Antony] persuaded many to choose the monastic life. And so monastic dwellings (*monasteria*) came into being in the mountains and the desert (*eremia*) was made a city by monks: having left their homes, they registered themselves for citizenship in heaven.”⁵⁴ The actual landscapes that Antony moved through were of little importance to Athanasius, for “[a]lthough he differentiated between the ‘outer’ and the ‘inner’ desert, this apparent dichotomy seems to refer only to basic geographical facts of the Eastern Desert, which the Alexandrian bishop did not translate into any essential difference in how these landscapes out to be understood.”⁵⁵

A later fifth-century Syrian text, *On Hermits and Desert Dwellers*, provides a salient description of how monastic settlement of the desert transformed the very nature of the space: “The desert, frightful in its desolation, became a city of deliverance for them, where the harps resound, and where they are preserved from harm. Desolation fled from the desert, for sons of the kingdom dwell there; it became like a great city with the sound of psalmody from their mouths.”⁵⁶ The physical nature and qualities of the desert were altered by the presence of the monks and their activities. The desert was no longer the space of punishment and the realm of demons – it was a landscape overrun by monks, conquering the demons and creating a pure landscape filled with athletes of Christ.

MONKS CIVILIZING THE DESERTED PLACES OF LATE ANTIQUE EGYPT

Narratives of relocation and settlement figure prominently in hagiographies and other forms of Egyptian monastic literature. The stories present carefully crafted accounts explaining why the founder of a community moved where he did and what incidents propelled his desire to seek out a desert place. But are these sources reliable historical accounts? Despite efforts to examine the redaction of the *Sayings of the Desert Fathers* in earlier generations for the kernels of historical events, most scholars are convinced that we can find little of the

“Desert Fathers of history” and are instead looking at the “Desert Fathers of fiction.”⁵⁷ In the *Sayings*, initially composed in the fifth century in Palestine and based upon oral transmissions of earlier stories, we can observe how a mind-scape of Egyptian monasticism emerged. A few of the *Sayings* refer to monastic buildings, the monks living within the landscape, and the importance of desert living. Certainly, details of those living in remote areas are extremely difficult to reconstruct except from passing references to individuals who reside in the more remote inner desert for short periods of time. In looking at the foundation narratives, we learn how monks were taught to regard the environment, their participation in a legacy of their founder, and the importance of God as a navigator to suitable locations for monastic living.

Wadi al-Natrun and Kellia are home to two of the most famous locations for the loose confederation of Desert Fathers. Known more for their individuality and independence as expressed in the *Sayings*, the two locations represent the essential founding of monastic life in northern Egypt. In Upper Egypt, Pachomius founded the first enclosed and self-defined communal monastery, *koinonion*, at Tabennesi. His foundation narratives, pieced together from the various later *Lives* and a handful of letters, provide an excellent comparison to the foundation stories for monastic communities in the north. Lastly, the sites of Bawit, in Middle Egypt, and Sohag, in Upper Egypt, are examples of sites with complex settlement plans and communities not well known outside of Egypt. Unlike the founders of the sites of Wadi al-Natrun, Kellia, and Tabennesi, who were revered in the broader Mediterranean monastic world, the founders associated with Bawit and Sohag had only a very minor impact on the exported history of Egyptian monasticism. The story of Apollo makes only a small appearance in the *History of the Monks in Egypt*, and yet the archaeological remains of his community at Bawit blossom into a massive monastic town and the monks participated in several monastic and lay economic networks. In the case of Shenoute, neither he nor his monastic federation is mentioned at all in the travelogues or histories recounting the birth and development of early Egyptian monasticism. Thus, we see a significant gap in the overall narrative of Egyptian monasticism. And, this is exactly the uneven portrait of Egyptian monasticism that has been recycled, retold, and codified as the mythology of Egyptian monasticism, one based on Delta monasticism and only select encounters with Upper Egyptian monasticism through the accounts of Pachomius.⁵⁸ A strong possible reason for this lacuna is that Apollo and Shenoute were not necessarily the founding monastic fathers for these sites, but later became honorific founders in the generations that succeeded them. Therefore, the foundation narratives did not circulate outside of Egypt. Taken together, the five sites illustrate how monastic authors crafted a generalized monastic landscape that overshadowed the actual landscape of connected monastic communities.

The Desert of Macarius in Sketis

Wadi al-Natrun was one of three areas in the northwest Delta to quickly earn an international reputation as the center for the monastic movement. Travelers such as Evagrius, John Cassian, and Palladius provide the major portraits of this desert as they traveled to Sketis and Kellia, often becoming temporary residents.⁵⁹ Palladius describes the monastic landscape as including a variety of locations: “I visited many cities and very many villages, every cave and all the desert dwellings of monks.”⁶⁰ Since he traveled in both the Egyptian and Libyan deserts and then visited monks in Upper Egypt, Mesopotamia, Palestine, Syria, Rome, and Campania, Palladius offers a comparative assessment of the Egyptian desertscape as he recounts it for his reader, Bishop Lausus.⁶¹ Palladius traveled to Egypt and lived at Kellia with Evagrius, before the latter’s death in 399. When John Cassian described Egypt and the settlements of the monks, he invited his listeners to “bear in mind the character of the country in which they dwelt, how they lived in a vast desert.”⁶² As a native of Scythia, Cassian placed the unusual landscape at the center of monastic training for his community that he founded in southern Gaul and highlighted the need for isolation in a place where monks are single-minded in their spiritual pursuits. Thus, the travelogues function not as naturalist accounts but as didactic treatises for authors and their audiences, who did not have first-hand knowledge of the landscape. While the desert became a central component of monasticism throughout the Mediterranean, descriptions about the Egyptian landscape, monastic settlements, and the records of foundations were embedded in larger themes to offer spiritual edification for contemporary communities.⁶³

The importance of Sketis as a place for monastic training was both physically and rhetorically constructed through the works of visitors to the communities and later *Lives* written about the monks who lived in Wadi al-Natrun. The physical space of Wadi al-Natrun with its salt lakes and the importance of the desert for both physical and mental challenges provided authors with rich imagery to build a myth of the monastic desert. Wadi al-Natrun was the center of a healthy salt trade, as the materials gathered there were used in the millennia-old practice of mummification (see Fig. 34).⁶⁴ The numerous salt lakes span a length of 30 kilometers in the Western Desert. Of this trajectory, an area of roughly 8,400 hectares was modified in some form for monastic habitation, with pockets of dense habitation in at least four areas with settlements ranging from 160 to 250 hectares.⁶⁵ The belief in the efficacy of Sketis for correct teaching and monastic living was a powerful tradition that led to the rapid mythologizing of the desert.⁶⁶ Early visitors, such as Palladius and John Cassian, referred to the area as Sketis (Coptic *Shihit*), but it was equally known as the “Desert of St. Macarius,” reflecting the importance of its first and most famous inhabitant and monastic founder.⁶⁷



34. Salt accumulation by one of the shores of a lake in Wadi al-Natrun, Egypt.

How did Sketis become the “Desert of Macarius?” This is a difficult story to extract from the hagiographical sources we have, but is necessary, as the attribution of a famous monastic founder to one’s community and landscape provided a sense of identity and unity for later authors.⁶⁸ David Brakke honestly states the vexing nature of the historical study of early monasticism is that “many of our literary sources are, to be blunt, not true ... few literary works come directly from Egyptian monks of the fourth and early fifth centuries.”⁶⁹ Therefore, reconstructing the story of Macarius as the founder of monasticism in Wadi al-Natrun truly is an effort in reconstructing a mosaic from bits from later traditions, possible oral histories, and much later community perceptions about Macarius. Despite this distance from the historical Macarius, it is invaluable to consider the accounts that were told about him. For “fiction may tell us as much about early monastic culture as the papyri and archaeological remains that more positivist historians value so highly.”⁷⁰ The exploration of how the desert of Sketis became “Macarius’s Desert” provides a path of inquiry that is just as informative for reconstructing perceptions of the landscape as reading letters and contracts from Late Antique monastics. In pulling together threads from a wide range of literary sources, and in one case from the letters and sermons of one founder, Shenoute, we can observe the construction of

a monastic landscape through the eyes of later generations. It is a landscape that requires good stories and memorable individuals, but in the end, those accounts are not historical truths, but historical stories that lend authority to existing communities.

Macarius of Egypt, also known as Macarius the Great and a contemporary of Amoun of Nitria, was the first monk to build his monastic residence in Sketis. His biographies in the *Sayings* and various Coptic sources differ as to whether he was married or not. In the *Sayings*, Macarius lived a monastic life in a cell near a village.⁷¹ The villagers, after learning of his piety, desired to make him their priest. Macarius effectively rejected their efforts by moving to another place where he could live in peace, this time living with another ascetic. Then a woman, who had become pregnant, leveled accusations of impropriety against him. Once he was found innocent of fathering the child, he moved yet again farther away from the town. With this final encounter, Macarius went to the desert of Sketis and built his own cell.

The horizontal movement from the populated to the uninhabited land reflects a vertical movement in terms of spiritual achievement and maturity. In the early fifth century, Palladius recounts his stories of Macarius after his own sojourn through the monastic deserts of Egypt and several years living as a monk at Kellia.⁷² During his lifetime, Macarius had at least two residences in Sketis and lived there for sixty years.⁷³ One was a cell where he resided with two other monks, and the second was a cave. Macarius could retreat to the cave, which was connected to his cell by a 90-meter tunnel running underground.⁷⁴ While Macarius the Great is an important figure for the section on the monks of Sketis, the place is not yet equated with him or his first settlement. For Palladius, Sketis is the “great desert” or the “great interior desert,” and therefore is known more for its physical size and its interiority, in contrast to the other monastic settlements he visited.⁷⁵ John Cassian, similarly, associates Sketis with greatness, for it is home to the “most celebrated fathers of monasticism, the ultimate in excellence” and Macarius has only a limited appearance in the stories that Cassian tells his fellow monks.⁷⁶

The Coptic *Life of Macarius*, which follows the biography of the *Lausiac History*, details how Macarius shared his ascetic life with two disciples, one who lived with him and another who lived in a cell nearby.⁷⁷ The Coptic version also identifies Sketis as the “great desert,” which “leads each person into feast of asceticism, whether he wants it or not.”⁷⁸ To be sure, this model of apprenticeship departs from the more communal house model of several individuals living under the guidance of a house father that will be common in the Pachomian and Shenoutean communities in Upper Egypt, or the later development of dwelling places in Sketis.⁷⁹ In all the descriptions of the landscape, the desert is described as the land of monks, and we hear little about who was the “first,” except for the short entry on Macarius of Alexandria in the *History*

of the Monks in Egypt in which he, and not Macarius the Great, is identified as “the first to build a hermitage in Sketis. This place is a waste land laying at a distance of a day’s and night’s journey from Nitria through the desert.”⁸⁰ The tradition of Macarius as the first inhabitant is mentioned only in passing in the *Sayings*, linked to Macarius the Great when he is described as “the only one living as an anchorite, but lower down there was another desert with several brothers.”⁸¹

By the eighth century, a slightly different story is detailed in the Coptic *Life of Saint Macarius of Scetis* that firmly places Macarius as the spiritual founder of desert monasticism in Wadi al-Natrun.⁸² In this vita, Macarius married against his wishes and adopted a spiritual marriage, always maintaining his purity. His only avenue to escape his marriage was to participate in the salt-mining trade in Wadi al-Natrun.⁸³ The topography mentions mountains of natron and the routes workmen used to move their camels back and forth between the salt areas and the villages. During one of his trips to the lakes, Macarius spent the night on an outcrop with other salt traders. While there, he had a dream or vision that would provide the basis for his eventual move to the desert.⁸⁴ The passage provides a vivid description of the landscape and then offers a gendered image of Macarius as a nursing mother for his spiritual children.

Later that night he found himself dreaming; a man was standing above him in a garment that cast forth lighting and was multicolored and striped, and he spoke to him, saying:

“Get up and survey this rock on both sides and this valley running down the middle. See that you understand what you see!” “And when I looked,” he [Macarius] said, “I said to the person who had spoken to me, ‘I don’t see anything except the beginning of the wadi to the west of the valley and also the mountain surround[ing] the valley; I see it.’ And he said to me, ‘Thus says God: ‘This land I will give to you. You shall dwell in it and blossom and your fruits shall increase and your seed shall multiply [Gen 12:7] and you shall bear multitudes of spiritual children and rulers who will suckle at your breasts; they will be made rulers over the peoples and your root shall be established upon the rock.’”⁸⁵

In this first identification of Sketis as Macarius’s land, God bestows the land and the promise of generations of children as a gift. The vision is a direct parallel to the promise made to Abram when he surveyed the land held by the Canaanites. Macarius does not, however, move into the desert of Sketis, but rather resides with other ascetics in cells on the edges of different towns. Eventually he adopts a cell of his own and receives a second visitation, this time from a cherub, who rebukes him for failing to respond to his earlier vision to relocate to the desert.⁸⁶

After prayer, Macarius was ready, “leaving behind everything in his cell” as a sign of his commitment to his new mission in the desert.⁸⁷ The walk took

two days, which would roughly be between 48 and 95 kilometers, depending on the heat and the difficulty of the paths taken into the desert.⁸⁸ At this point the cherub asked Macarius to choose the location he would like to settle in, but he admitted that he did not recognize anything in the area. The cherub said: "See, the place lies before you; but examine it and take possession of a good site. Only, be on the watch for evil spirits and their evil ambushes."⁸⁹ He selected a place at "the beginning of the wadi near the site where natron was extracted."⁹⁰ In deciding to be close to the salt mines, he also made a conscious choice to be near others, the workmen and guards at the salt lakes, which would later prove to be detrimental to his solitude.

Forced to find a quieter location because of the noise of the salt mine industry, Macarius moved again – this time to a mountain cave. He went now into the desert and selected a natural rock formation for carving two caves. One served for his daily needs for plaiting baskets and the other was purely for liturgical use. His presence in the desert caused the demons to complain restlessly about his occupation of their territory. They voiced their fears that more monks might join him: "Shall we allow this man to stay here and allow the desert places on account of him to become a port and harbor for everyone in danger, and especially to become a city like heaven for those who hope for eternal life? If we allow him to remain here, multitudes will gather around him and the desert places will not be under our power."⁹¹ The conquest of the desert places surfaces again as a central theme in the stories of monastic occupation of the landscape. The deepest fear of the demons is quickly realized as multitudes start to gather around Macarius in the desert.

The *Life* describes how Macarius taught the monks how to build their own dwellings. They carved caves into the rock and also used palm branches, trunks, and stalks "from the wadi" to finish off the dwellings and create a good shelter.⁹² At this point the community was made up of individual cave dwellings and the monks still fetched water from the wadi, as Macarius "had not yet dug cisterns."⁹³ Practically speaking, the community's building program needed to expand to accommodate both daily and spiritual needs of the residents. They built a small church together, then dug wells, and finally they needed larger dwellings.⁹⁴ As a sign of God's pleasure with Macarius, a cherub told the saint: "The Lord has come to dwell in this place on account of you."⁹⁵ The fact that God now dwells in the desert is directly linked to Macarius's success in forcing the demons out of the land.

His achievements prepare him for his final relocation to an even more important area of the wadi that Macarius will bring to perfection. The *Life* offers yet another description of the land Macarius is directed to occupy:

The cherub led him and took him atop the rock at the southern part of the wadi to the west of the cistern at the top of the valley and said to him, "Begin by making yourself a dwelling here and build a church, for a

large number of people will live here after a while.” And so he lived there to the day of his death, and after his death they called that place “Abba Macarius” because he finished his life there.⁹⁶

Macarius’s story of movement into the desert reflects similar patterns of movements for other monks. Many began by living alone in their town or village; some are even married and secretly agreed to a “spiritual marriage” with their wives in order to practice the ascetic life. When tensions arose that threaten the privacy of the private ascetic life, many sought out a more experienced monk to serve as a mentor and guide.

In the Coptic *Odes to Saints of Scetis*, Macarius is described as “the great net who drew everyone into the Way of God, and put upon them the holy habit, teaching them to dwell solitary in holes of the ground.”⁹⁷ The reference to “holes in the ground” invokes the language of the faithful prophets, who resided in the harsh landscape of the desert (Heb. 11:38). Sketis evolved from the residence of a solitary monastic to become an entire region, home to four well-known and still existing monastic communities. Christian Arabic authors often referenced the region as *Mizān al-qulūb*, meaning the place of the “Weighing of Hearts,” a literal Arabic rendering of the Coptic *Shi-hēt*, as a reference to the spiritual challenges one faced while in the region. In the bulk of the Arabic literature of Christians and Muslims, however, the region is identified as Wadi al-Natrun, the most common designation today, or as Wadi Habīb. Medieval authors, such as Abu al-Makarim and al-Maqrīzī, attribute Macarius as the founder of the monastic community in Wadi al-Natrun.⁹⁸ Abu al-Makarim reports that Macarius was directed by Antony to move to Wadi al-Natrun and then many monks took up residence in Wadi al-Natrun because of Macarius’s “noble deeds.” By the fifteenth century a listing of monasteries in al-Maqrīzī’s *Khitat* includes a description of Wadi al-Natrun and he presents an extensive etymology. Al-Maqrīzī listed eighty-six monasteries in the desert.⁹⁹ He describes Wadi Habib as being known by a variety of names such as Wadi al-Natrun, “Desert of *shihāt*,” “Desert of *askīt*,” and *Mizān al-qulūb*. His settlement history recounts how the monasteries dwindled down to seven in a land where “sandy flats alternate with salt-marshes, waterless deserts, and dangerous rocks.”¹⁰⁰ The great desert of Macarius had numerous monasteries “in ruins.”¹⁰¹ The ruins would remain until the visits of Hugh Evelyn White, who also remarked on the ubiquitous nature of the “ruins” in the 1920s.

The Greek, Coptic, Syriac, and Arabic traditions relating to the settlement of Wadi al-Natrun share and enhance the importance of its salt as a purifying agent in monastic living and Macarius as a builder. The salt of Wadi al-Natrun was a “spiritual salt” and was “an explicit contrast with the salt of death” found in the inhabited world.¹⁰² The salt also became a physical representation of the theological importance of Wadi al-Natrun in the monastic imagination. By inhabiting the desert, the monks tamed the wilderness.¹⁰³ They caused the

salted land to be fertile again, both physically and socially, with athletes of God. In the end, all the accounts about Macarius speak to the importance of displacing demons through settlement and occupation.

The Quiet Retreat of Amoun at Kellia

Traveling nearly forty years after the founding of Nitria and Kellia, the first long-term visitors and foreign residents at the two sites wrote accounts that were focused more on inspiring their readers or patrons than on offering an accurate recounting of the physical landscape or the monastic architecture that they lived in. Palladius lived for nine years at Kellia and Evagrius for sixteen; yet, neither writer is compelled to tell us much about the actual landscape, as they, like other monastic writers, are engaged in writing literature to inspire and encourage other monastics about how to live the ascetic life. Therefore, the story of Kellia's foundation needs to be pieced together from fragments of diverse monastic sources with very different objectives than recounting the life of one particular founder.

The foundation story of Kellia is linked directly with the older foundation story for Mount Nitria.¹⁰⁴ Both sites were located further north of Sketis and are often described in Late Antique travelogues in terms of distance relative to or from Alexandria, the closest urban center to the two settlements.¹⁰⁵ Unlike Sketis, where a sustained monastic community preserved and expanded earlier written traditions throughout the late medieval period, the communities at Nitria and Kellia were abandoned by the eighth or ninth century, resulting in fewer sources that document how monks reproduced their community's history. Therefore, the accounts of Palladius, Evagrius, John Cassian, and the anonymous author of the *History of the Monks in Egypt* provide an early record of oral traditions circulating within Egypt before the written form of the later fifth-century *Sayings of the Desert Fathers*.

The story begins with a man named Amoun, who left his wife after eighteen years to live in the Delta at the site of Nitria. When Palladius ventured to Nitria, it was a mountain located seventy miles from Lake Mareotis and inhabited by more than 5,000 monks, and it was Arsisius, a resident, who told him the story of the community's origins.¹⁰⁶ Having the blessing of his wife, Amoun set out to the "inner part" of the mountain of Nitria, "for there were no monasteries there yet – and he made himself two round cells."¹⁰⁷ The Coptic *Life of Antony* includes a chapter on Amoun, where he is identified as one who lived at the *Toou* of Nitria, and his death was known by Antony, who saw his soul ascend.¹⁰⁸ That story is the beginning of the account in the *History of the Monks in Egypt* for Amoun.¹⁰⁹ The area of Nitria, like Sketis, was associated with the mining of niter (potassium nitrate), a substance used in cleaning but not the same as natron.¹¹⁰ Like Macarius, Amoun sought out the

remote settlements that others had inhabited, which illustrates he knew men were living in the fringes. Here in the flat desert, far from urban centers and rugged limestone cliffs, Amoun gained a following and encouraged his male colleagues to adopt both solitary and communal dwellings in the Delta.¹¹¹ The story of Kellia's founding is not found in the sayings attributed to Amoun, but rather in the stories about Antony, reflecting his greater significance as being a companion in the establishment of the settlement along with Amoun.

In the *Sayings* attributed to Antony we learn that he visited Amoun one day and they discussed a growing concern surfacing at Mount Nitria – the mountain was too crowded and too noisy.¹¹² Amoun felt restless because his fellow monastics were arguing about how to live and where to live in great silence. He asked Antony: “How far from Nitria are these brothers to go before building their new dwellings?”¹¹³ The two monks set out after breakfast and walked into the desert until the sun set. They covered roughly 19 kilometers that day.¹¹⁴ As a sign that their relocation was sanctioned by God, the two monks were protected from the intensity of the sun that day. Once they had stopped for the night, they planted a cross to mark the location.¹¹⁵ Antony said that others would recognize the cross as a sign and would know that this would be a peaceful place to live, if they wished to live in such a manner.¹¹⁶ It was here that Amoun began the community later known to Evagrius, Palladius, and John Cassian (see Fig. 14).

The distance between Kellia and Nitria was enough for a day's walk between the two communities, but also significant enough that there was a separation between the two groups. The location was in the inner desert, removed farther from paths of activity than Mount Nitria, and in a deserted area.¹¹⁷ The settlement would become known as a monastic retreat from more bustling sites, for to live here was “to live a more remote life, stripped down to the bare rudiments.”¹¹⁸ The remarkable nature of Kellia is that the settlement grew from Amoun's desire to find solitude and to escape the crowds, but it is a later story, one that emerges perhaps in response to the growing popularity of monastic tourism in the late fourth and early fifth centuries. In the end, the site superseded that of Nitria and literally became the city in the desert that Athanasius hoped would one day develop. Archaeological evidence exists at the site for definite settlements in the fifth century, but the earliest levels do not correspond with the time of Amoun, Evagrius, or Palladius. The site's eventual decline in the late eighth and ninth centuries would also mean a decline in monastic literature about the settlement as the built community became a part of the desert topography. Both Kellia and Sketis, as representatives of desert monasticism in Lower Egypt, convey how monastic literature was shaped within Egypt and in non-Egyptian sources. For those who transmitted the accounts of Egypt's northern desert monasteries, the stories of foundations were of lesser importance than the lessons to be learned in hearing the words

of the Desert Fathers. And despite the importance of Kellia as a location welcoming to foreign, monastic guests, it was other monastic sites, such as Sketis, that seemed to capture the imagination of monastic authors more than the location of the “Cells,” the colloquial name for the site. For Sketis, where monasticism still thrives in Wadi al-Natrun, we have a rich history to consult for later medieval perceptions of Delta monasticism. But by the ninth century, Kellia had vanished from the early medieval geography of monastic Egypt, not to be found again until 1964.

Pachomius's Community of Village Monasteries

After the Desert Fathers of Lower Egypt, the most often referenced communities of monks of Egypt were those associated with Pachomius (292–346) and his *koinonia* in Upper Egypt.¹¹⁹ His place in the history of Egyptian monasticism is as central as Antony's. Both Antony and Pachomius hold positions of authority more through the retelling of their ascetic lives as recounted and recycled by later authors and biographers than by what they actually built. James Goehring explains the difficulties surrounding Pachomius's place as a founder:

The picture of Pachomius's originality is, however, literary rather than historical ... The *Vita* makes clear through these stories that Pachomius's innovation had little to do with the coenobitic institution itself. It was rather the organizational principle of a *koinonia* or system of affiliated coenobitic monasteries and the development of a monastic rule that are credited to Pachomius... The theory of a Pachomian origin of coenobitic monasticism must thus be discarded ... The vast number of monasteries in Egypt in the late Byzantine era simply cannot be traced to a single point of origin.¹²⁰

Philip Rousseau urges for a similar corrective in the reading of monastic foundations by asserting “the formal establishment of a communal way of life did not represent a sudden lurch in a new direction.”¹²¹ For the discussion here, the story of Pachomius's monastic foundations provides a useful case study for assessing how monastic communities looked at the desert and constructed the story of monastic settlement in Upper Egypt. But, like the narratives of the northern Delta deserts, the sources we have are deeply layered in generations of authors and redactors, consciously constructing a life of Pachomius. The authors were motivated to create history and thereby ensure the community's identity.¹²²

Goehring has written extensively about the nature of village monasticism as a phenomenon that is more significant than scholars once believed: “Properly understood, Pachomian monasticism is not a product of the desert, but a form of village asceticism.”¹²³ The repositioning of Pachomius out of the desert and

into the cultivated land is an important component of nuancing the history of Egyptian monasticism. Do the accounts of Pachomius's reoccupation of the village share any themes with the famous accounts of the communities in the north? And in what ways do the descriptions provide a regional, Upper Egyptian story of monastic settlements?

Pachomius's story is unique in comparison to that at the other four sites discussed in this chapter, as we do not have any substantive archaeological remains for any of the six monasteries that he built or the three other monasteries that later joined his *koinonia*. Given the rich literary sources surrounding Pachomius and his importance in monastic history both in Egypt and in the wider Mediterranean monastic world, the lack of physical evidence is an unfortunate lacuna in the archaeology of monastic Egypt. Physical indications of monastic settlements and the presence of monastic travelers are certainly evident in the form of Christian graffiti and dipinti in the towns and villages, in such areas as Wadi Sheikh Ali, Abydos, Naqada, and even around Pbow, where Pachomius lived.¹²⁴ The only probable physical remains associated with Pachomius are linked to a small church at Faw al-Qibli, ancient Pbow, which was excavated in the late 1970s and 1980s.¹²⁵ Working in the late 1960s, Fernand Debono interpreted some mud brick walls at Pbow as possible monastic structures, but his excavation areas have been lost and subsequent explorations in the area by Bastiaan Van Elderen, and later Peter Grossmann, did not locate Debono's excavation areas.¹²⁶ Therefore, we do not have any extensive monastic remains available for archaeological study that would allow us to examine the physical realities in comparison with the monastic literature associated with Pachomius.

Let's begin by looking at the numerous stories of Pachomius's life to learn how he came to start a monastic movement that embraced the fringes but not the desert. The *Life of Pachomius* is preserved in several manuscripts in Coptic (Boharic and Sahidic), Greek, and Arabic.¹²⁷ The Boharic *Life* (also called the Great Coptic *Life of Our Father Pachomius*) provides the richest description of Pachomius's movements, building methods, and the settlements. On his release from conscription, Pachomius set out to live in service to others, but he was not yet a monk, according to the Boharic *Life*. He arrived at his first "deserted village" called Šeneset (Gk. Chenoboskion), which had only a "few inhabitants."¹²⁸ He walked down to a standing temple called Pmamposterposen, "the place of the baking of the bricks."¹²⁹ God directed Pachomius to "settle down here" and he planted both a vegetable garden and palm trees so that he could provide for himself and serve some villagers with his food.¹³⁰ The location was "scorched by the intensity of the heat," but it was not entirely abandoned, as other Christians lived there, and he was baptized in a local church.¹³¹ As a result of Pachomius's generosity and charismatic Christian example, the population in the town began to increase, and the burden of community service caused Pachomius to spend a lot of time teaching others.¹³² After a plague ravaged the

population and Pachomius tended to the sick and dying, he decided that his physical ministry was not suitable and he needed greater solitude. It was during this period of searching that Pachomius encountered Apa Palamon, a monk who lived on the outskirts of the village. Pachomius decided he would rather live with Palamon and away from the needs of the villagers. Before his departure, Pachomius entrusted the responsibility for his garden and date palm trees to an old monk. Despite Palamon's efforts to send Pachomius away, Pachomius convinced Palamon of his will to pursue the ascetic life and trained with the older monk for three months.¹³³

The location of Palamon's dwelling is not clear in the *Lives* except that it is just beyond the village of Šeneset and near or on a mountain of the desert. Palamon was considered a father and teacher for a collection of other like-minded monastics who resided in the mountain; but only Pachomius lived with Palamon.¹³⁴ Palamon and Pachomius trained their bodies by carrying baskets of sand up and down the mountain.¹³⁵ Pachomius, being younger than Palamon, also ventured into the acacia forest and the "far desert" to practice his *askesis*.¹³⁶ In addition to the natural environment, Pachomius also used the abandoned tombs "filled with dead [bodies]" for prayer; he was so dedicated to this practice that the ground beneath him in the tomb would be muddy because of his perspiration.¹³⁷ Others monks resided nearby on the mountain, but only Pachomius appears to have traversed the desert landscape. After Palamon experienced a severe illness, Pachomius took a further step to seek independence from Palamon and pursue his own path, but away from others at Šeneset. He left the mountain, crossed the desert, and arrived at the large acacia forest by the Nile: "Led by the spirit, he covered a distance of some ten miles and came to a desert village on the river's shore called Tabennesi."¹³⁸ It was here that Pachomius was instructed by a heavenly voice to reside.

A description of the desert on the east bank of the Nile tells more about Pachomius's ability to withstand difficulties than about the specific topography: "Around that mountain was a desert full of thorns where he was frequently sent to gather and carry wood. And since he was barefoot, he was sorely troubled for some time by the thorns which fixed themselves to his feet."¹³⁹ On another walk through the desert, he ended up near the deserted village of Tabennesi (Nag' al-Sabriyat). Here he heard from God while in prayer: "Stay here and build a monastery; for many will come to you to become monks."¹⁴⁰ Pachomius agrees to expand his dwelling in a "deserted village" to a monastery.¹⁴¹ On his return to Palamon, Pachomius shared his account with his spiritual father. Together they built a cell at Tabennesi for Pachomius, and Palamon affirmed his ties to Pachomius as a "true son" so that they would visit each other after Pachomius remained in Tabennesi. The importance of mutual visitation was a tangible component of their relationship.¹⁴² The fact that the site is called a "deserted village" in

all accounts, including the Arabic *Life*, suggests that Pachomius and other monks like him had found standing buildings or ruins, at the very least, and that the spaces could be repaired for habitation.¹⁴³ The ease of adding and repairing a mud brick structure would have made the processes relatively quick.

Soon afterwards Palamon died, and Pachomius returned to Šeneset to bury his teacher.¹⁴⁴ It is at this point that Pachomius was visited by his biological brother, who went north on learning of Palamon's death to live with Pachomius. The Sahidic *Life* records in an abbreviated form a significant disagreement between the two brothers, and in the Boharic *Life* we learn that the cause stems from a difference of opinion regarding whether to expand their monastic settlement and invite others to join them. It is a rich passage in early monastic hagiography about monastic construction and attitudes toward the built environment at Tabennesi: "One day, as they were building a part of their dwelling, Pachomius wanted to extend it because of the crowds that would come to him, but John's mind was that they should stay alone. When Pachomius saw that John was spoiling the wall they were building, he said to him, 'Stop being foolish!'"¹⁴⁵ The tension between the two brothers is expressed in the building itself and in how well the walls were made for the expansion. John's deliberate sabotage of the built wall reflected his displeasure with changing the two-person dwelling into one that would accommodate more monks and thus expand their settlement.

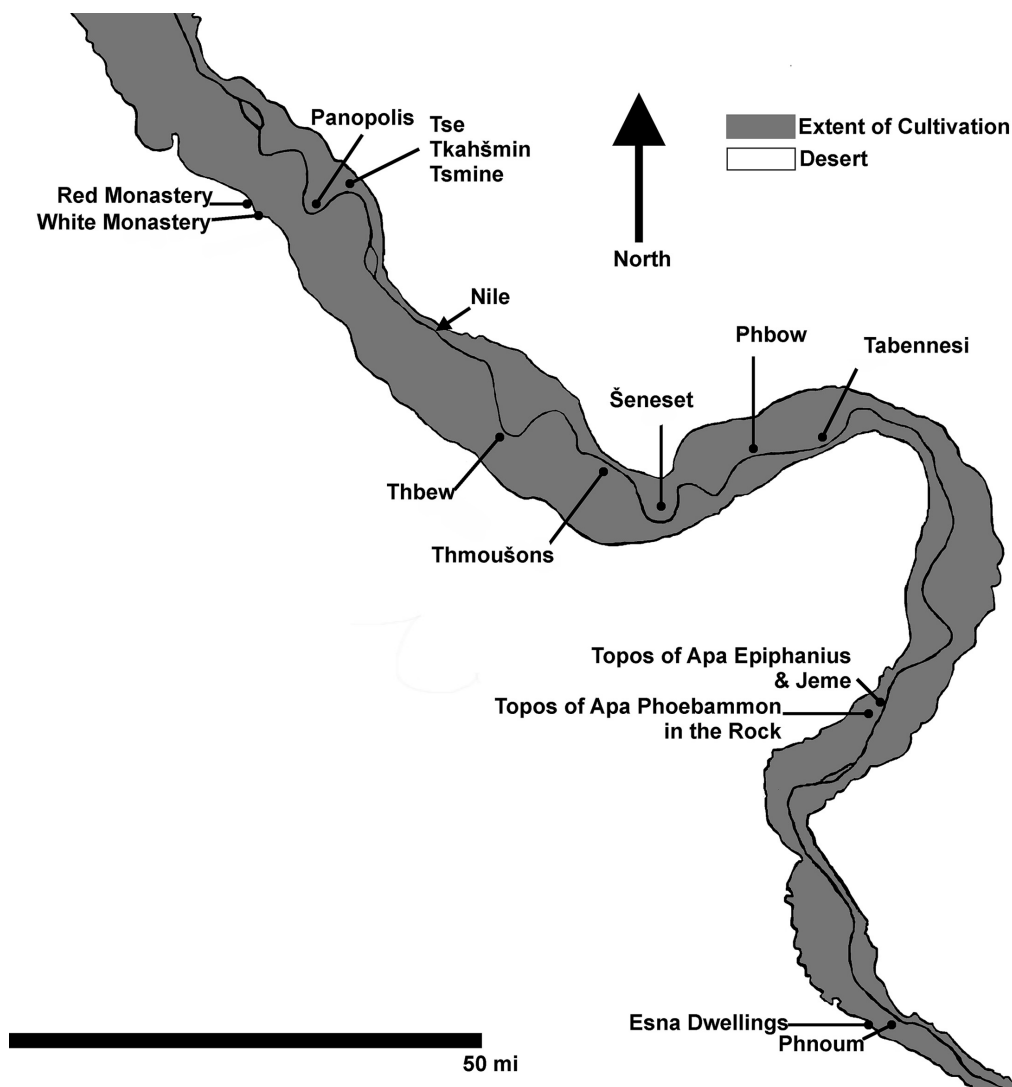
In the Sahidic *Life*, Pachomius's response to the difference of opinion involves an unusual account of a brick used for prayer. It demonstrates the use of materials and their response to the spiritual devotion of Pachomius. Apparently he stood on a mud brick for discomfort in an underground cell in order to deter sleepiness. After a night of fervent prayer, the brick had dissolved because of the great volume of Pachomius's perspiration. On a second night of prayer, necessitated by another bout of conflict with his brother, Pachomius prayed and perspired so much that the brick did not just break up but actually became a muddy pile.¹⁴⁶ This story reveals one of the rare instances of construction materials, such as mud bricks, being used in ascetic practice.¹⁴⁷ His prayers were effective, for many individuals began to visit the brothers, thereby proving Pachomius to be correct in his desire for expansion.

Individuals from the surrounding villages started to join Pachomius and build dwellings for themselves. Pachomius's fame was not tied to just Tabennesi, and within a span of a few years Pachomius ruled over nine monastic settlements spanning a distance of more than 220 kilometers of the Nile, from Panopolis to Latopolis. Pachomius's network was one of governance and a shared monastic rule – the *koinonia*. The nine monasteries that formed this network, in order from north to south, were Tse, Tkahšmin, Tsmine, Tbew, Tmoušons, Šeneset, Pbow, Tabennesi, and Phnoum. In

addition to these, Pachomius also formed two communities for women, stemming from a desire to build a community where his sister could practice monasticism.¹⁴⁸ Of the nine male communities, Pachomius and his brothers built six, sometimes only building a wall around existing structures. Unlike Macarius, whose authority extended only to those immediately living around him and his successors and did not cover the entirety of the 30-km-long stretch of the natron lakes, Pachomius's leadership spanned an extensive area of Upper Egypt. This does not mean he had jurisdiction over all the monastic communities that lay between and among the eleven communities. The accounts of those who elected to seek membership in Pachomius's *koinonia* reveal the prevalence of other monastic communities in the region. Even if we look more conservatively at the concentration of the five male monasteries around Tabennesi, Pachomius was traveling in a 55,000-hectare district, often by boat.¹⁴⁹ The fact of the matter is that the area Pachomius moved into was not entirely deserted and was already home to a variety of cities and villages along the Nile banks, associated with cultivated fields and easy access for river travel.

The account of how the nine men's monasteries came to be part of the *koinonia* is a complex story of building and incorporation. Tabennesi was the first Pachomian community built in a deserted village, likely meaning an area with low population and some vacant buildings that Pachomius and others could repurpose (see Fig. 35).¹⁵⁰ But then the population in Tabennesi started to increase; however, we are not told whether this is a natural increase in population after the plague or if Pachomius and his brothers were a point of attraction. He and his fellow monastics built a church for the lay community, and eventually even the monastic population increased enough that they needed their own sanctuary within the monastery. However, the "cramped" and "crowded" nature of Tabennesi forced Pachomius to pray for wisdom as to what he should do.¹⁵¹ For reasons we are not told, further expansion at Tabennesi seemed out of the question. God answered Pachomius's request for guidance through a vision and provided a clear directive: "Go north to that deserted village lying downriver from you which is called Phbow (Pbow), and build there a monastery for yourself."¹⁵² With this vision relating to the founding of Pbow, we have the first of the monasteries that formed Pachomius' *koinonia*, as he was no longer the head of a single community, but the leader of a nascent federation.

Similar to Tabennesi, Pbow was a deserted village and presumably had some standing mud brick structures and possibly even a few inhabitants. In examining the foundation passages and how the *Lives* present the villages, Goehring raises the question as to the literary nature of the phrase "deserted village" and whether it is a conscious choice by the authors to describe an area that had experienced depopulation: "While the Pachomian accounts suggest a



35. Map detailing the possible location of Pachomian monastic establishments in relationship to other monastic sites in Upper Egypt.

completely vacant village akin to the ghost towns of the old American West, it is possible that the label indicates nothing more than that a sufficient degree of vacancy and open space existed within the late antique villages to enable Pachomius to establish ascetic communities there.”¹⁵³ At the very least, there was vacancy in the village so that Pachomius was not challenging village or town authorities by adding settlements to the area. The deserted nature of the village may, therefore, also imply it was deserted by administrative secular authority. There seems to have been some ecclesiastical authority over the village, because the Boharic *Life* states that when Pachomius built the “celebration

room,” he needed the permission of the bishop in order to do so.¹⁵⁴ Whatever the state of Pbow, Pachomius also built a wall for the monastery and houses for the monks. The third monastery added to the *koinonia* involved the addition of an already preexisting monastic community at Šeneset.¹⁵⁵ Further north, and across the river on the west bank, Apa Jonas, the leader of the monastic community at Tmoušons, asked Pachomius for affiliation with the *koinonia*.¹⁵⁶ With the addition of Šeneset and Tmoušons, Pachomius now had four monasteries in a 400-square-kilometer area under his leadership.

The second wave of expansion took Pachomius’s vision significantly further downriver, about 80 kilometers from Tmoušons to Tkahšmin, which is located near the city of Panopolis (Coptic Šmin).¹⁵⁷ Although it is not described as a desert village, the brothers traveled down the Nile to the site to build the monastery and dwelling places (pl. *mma shope*) for the monks. On completion, the community was given the name Tse. The sixth settlement to join the *koinonia* was facilitated by a letter from Arios, a bishop from Šmin.¹⁵⁸ The full participation of the brothers even included Pachomius, who carried the clay used for making the bricks on his back, just like the others.¹⁵⁹ The story of this construction project takes on an interesting turn when a segment of the population in Šmin regarded Pachomius’s building activities as a threat and vandalized the construction site at night, “throw[ing] down what the brothers had built up during the day.”¹⁶⁰ In the end, God instructed an angel to provide a protective barrier around the building site and wall with a ring of fire, protecting the site from further vandalism. The monastery of Tbew was the seventh monastery incorporated into the *koinonia*.¹⁶¹ Following the pattern of earlier existing monasteries that sought affiliation with Pachomius, Tbew was the last of the five core monasteries in the immediate 50-kilometer stretch of the Nile, running north from Tabennesi, to join the *koinonia*.

The last two monastic foundations are discussed in the Boharic *Life*, but only mentioned in passing in the Greek *Life*.¹⁶² Pachomius receives divine directives for the last two settlements at Tsmine, near Šmin, and Phnoum, near the mountain of Sne (Gk. Latopolis). These monasteries create the north boundary (Tsmine along with the monasteries at Šmin and Tse) and the south boundary of Pachomius’s administrative presence in Upper Egypt. Tsmine’s building program was similar to the others as he “finished it well, like all the other monasteries.”¹⁶³ It seemed important enough that he transferred Petronios from Tbew to the region of Panopolis to supervise the three monasteries located there: Tsmine, Šmin, and Tse. All three had been built under Pachomius’s hand.

The building of the monastic community at Phnoum by the mountain of Sne, 150 kilometers upriver from Pbow, was extremely far away from the heart of the *koinonia*. A final vision directed Pachomius to go south and organize another monastery.¹⁶⁴ The final building project was not without its problems. The author of the Boharic *Life* includes a brief report on the tensions

between Pachomius and locals. In this case a bishop, who rightly may have seen Pachomius's presence in his area as a challenge to his authority, organizes the protest. The erection of the monastic wall by Pachomius becomes a visual source of conflict for the inhabitants of Sne, who shared the same dislike for monastic construction as the inhabitants of Šmin. The passage demonstrates the symbolic power inherent in new boundary walls as a challenge to present authority in the region:

When he had begun building the wall of the monastery, the bishop of that diocese got a large crowd together; they set out and rushed at [Pachomius] to drive him out of the place. The man of God our father Pachomius withstood the danger until the Lord scattered them and they fled before his face. After that he built the monastery, a very large one, and finished it well, in full keeping with the rules of the eight other monasteries he had built.¹⁶⁵

The final description of the ninth monastery states that Pachomius had in fact built all the others, when in reality the *Lives* clarify that he built only six of the nine. The other three became members either through self-election into the *koinonia* or by donation. The later conflicts in Šmin and Phnoum therefore highlight the sharp difference between Pachomius's first monasteries built in the deserted villages where ecclesiastical authorities and local administration did not interfere with his efforts, perhaps owing to the lax attitude toward new building projects in Late Antique Egypt.

The foundation accounts of the village monasteries of the Pachomian *koinonia* provide a rich and variegated account of the many ways spaces became monastic outside of the desertscape. Despite the hagiographical tendency of these sources to commemorate Pachomius and his immediate successors, Theodore and Horsiesius, the stories provide several important components that reflect a generalized landscape of Upper Egypt. Pachomius was always commanded to build monasteries by God, and when other monastic communities desired his leadership, it was because their own leader recognized the benefits of the *koinonia*. The six monasteries Pachomius built included two sparsely populated villages (Tabennesi and Pbow), two cities (Šmin and Phnoum), and two areas located near the same city of Šmin (Tse and Tsmine). In the case of the three affiliated monasteries, two had very different origins: Šeneset was a loosely inhabited village like Tabennesi and Pbow, while Tbew was built on a wealthy family's estate.

When comparing the Pachomian foundation narrative material, whose complex history includes purpose-built structures and the occupation of abandoned buildings and monasteries, with the material from Middle Egypt and the Great Desert of Sketis, two parallels appear. First, the literary traditions use visions and dreams as mechanisms for legitimizing the actions of founders and foreshadowing the success of their settlement choices. Pachomius had received

the first indication of his future success on the night of his baptism with a dream. He was given a surrealist image of how God's pleasure with him would be a blessing for those around him. As dew fell from heaven upon his head, it condensed in his right hand simultaneously, transforming into a honeycomb. This sweet sign of blessing and favor – his honeycombed right hand – fell to the ground and spread honey over the earth.¹⁶⁶ His blessedness spreads throughout the land of Egypt and beyond.

Another similarity between the monastic narrative sources is the importance of the generalized landscape and its topography with the physical markers of the monastic settlements. The deserts, caves, mountains, forests, villages, and the Nile appear as real places for monastic living. Towers, dwellings, and walls mark the texts as signs of monastics laying claim to the land. As athletes and soldiers of Christ, monks could quickly build a mud brick structure or repair a wall, which was vandalized in the night, with the end goal of fulfilling God's vision. If they were faithful in building, God would reside in the new locations and bless the community.

The one significant difference between the village monastic settlement narratives of Pachomius and the accounts of the desert dwellings is the importance of displacing demons through habitation. In the case of Sketis and the regions around Nitria and Kellia, the natural environment was certainly inhabited, but not by bishops, villagers, or administrative officials. While we know that miners were living in the Delta, the narratives present the only real threats in the deserts as nonhuman. Demons could hide in the desert, camouflaged by the caves, quarries, and mountains. The monastic settlement then forces demons to become beings without homes as the desert and its associated areas transform into heavenly realms of angels on earth.

Village monastic narratives do not dwell on demons and their locations because people already inhabited the villages they wished to live in. The dangers were different in village monasteries: monks refusing to follow the coenobitic rule, family members who continually visit, and even bishops who tear down walls. Pachomius and his followers carved out different spaces for themselves in the towns. They remodeled abandoned buildings as others remodeled quarries. In the end, building near others who did not share the monastic goal of the ascetic life could result in significant conflict, just like the conflict with demons in the desert. In all cases, the sources do not focus on the spatial configuration of the settlements, or how monastic buildings differed from nonmonastic structures.

Apollo Builds a Monastery for Phib in Bawit

The monastic settlement of Bawit, located 310 kilometers south of Wadi al-Natrun and 250 kilometers north of Tabennesi, is in the heart of Middle Egypt,



36. Wall painting from Chapel 36 at Bawit showing three monks: Apa Makarios, Apa Moses the Freeman, and Apa Jeremias.

and is the site of the Monastery of Apa Apollo. In contrast to Sketis's, whose reputation spread widely outside of Egypt to the Mediterranean world, Apollo's community was less well known, perhaps because of its southern location and the fact that fewer foreign, Late Antique Christians traveled to it. The Monastery of Apa Apollo's location should not, however, suggest it was small or insignificant. The central built community covered an area of 40 hectares and its walls were painted with the faces of numerous monks who may have once lived at the community in the sixth and later centuries (see Fig. 36). If the remote cliff dwellings are included in the area, the community expands to an area of 78 hectares, although not all of the land was used for building. Bawit is roughly half the size of Al-Ashmunein (Gk. Hermopolis Magna) (65 hectares), one of the largest cities in Upper Egypt for this period. This comparison illustrates that Bawit was a medium-sized town in its own right. Given Bawit's size and significance as a major settlement in Middle Egypt, how does its foundation narrative history contribute to a history of monastic authors crafting a generalized landscape, which overshadowed the reality of the actual monastic landscape?

The earliest account to reference Apollo as a founder is the late fourth-century *History of the Monks in Egypt*. The anonymous traveler who visited Egypt recounted a foundation narrative of the settlement by Apollo in

the Hermopolite nome. While not the main intent of the text, the account includes the evolution of Apollo's community from solitary dwellings to a thriving community that welcomed foreign visitors such as a pilgrim from Palestine.¹⁶⁷ The pilgrim's report states that Apollo was a leader of 500 monks, who lived in desert hermitages at the foot of a mountain.¹⁶⁸ During Apollo's eightieth year (385 or 388), he founded his own "great monastery" that likely was the collective term for the monastic houses.¹⁶⁹ The *History of the Monks in Egypt* presents an oral history of Apollo's community, beginning with the monk's withdrawal from the world and a forty-year sojourn in the desert. This period ended with a divine call to return to the "inhabited land" in order to assemble a group of followers.¹⁷⁰ Apollo established his dwelling in a cave at the foot of the mountain that adjoined the "settled region."¹⁷¹ Here he lived with five other monks and his gifts as a healer attracted other ascetics who lived in hermitages around him.¹⁷² The *History of the Monks in Egypt* states that these individuals shared a "common life" with each other and ate at a common table.¹⁷³ As a Latin source, the topographical indicators are few: a mountain, a desert, and the inhabited land. Given the nature of the source from an oral tradition, it is difficult to use this account to establish a firm ecological history of the area. The foundation account of the monastic settlement in the region of Hermopolis and the charismatic personality of Apollo are at the heart of the story. The environmental accuracy of the description is not necessarily important to the author or his readers. The focal point is Apollo and the blessings he could offer as a living angel.¹⁷⁴

Numerous Coptic texts collected from the nome of Hermopolis speak of a *topos* of Apa Apollo in the Hermopolite nome. Sarah J. Clackson translated and edited several of the documentary texts from the region with the objective of attributing them to either of the monasteries of Apollo at Bawit or at Titkooh. Clackson's reading and analysis led her to conclude that there may be other monasteries dedicated to Apollo in the area.¹⁷⁵ In most cases the documentary sources do not speak at all to the question of foundation, narrative stories, or the spatial configuration of the settlements. For this information we must turn to a later source to see how the community memorialized their founder and how the community continued to elevate Apollo as a spiritual leader whose physical dwellings exuded sacredness.

The Sahidic Coptic *Life of Phib* is a hagiography chronicling the life of Apollo's closet companion Phib and their links with a settlement at Titkooh. It is a tenth-century *Life* and makes it clear that Apollo is the patron for a large monastic foundation for the region.¹⁷⁶ In comparing the fourth-century Latin travelogue with the later *Life*, Apollo's authority has extended from a story of solitary sojourn to a more detailed history explaining why Apollo was called to return to the settled land, how he moved between the desert lands, and

what the general topography of the area consisted of. The attractiveness of the ascetic lifestyle practiced by Apollo and Phib is the reason given to explain why others wished to reside with them; the landscape has little attraction, for it is Apollo and Phib whose actions *within* the landscape demonstrate they are worthy of admiration.¹⁷⁷

The *Life of Phib* begins with the partnership between Apollo and Phib pursuing the monastic life together “on the mountain (*toou*) of Titkooh.”¹⁷⁸ Tim Vivian observes that the Coptic use of *toou* can mean either a geophysical mountain or a monastic community.¹⁷⁹ If this is the case, then the reference to the mountain in the *Life* could carry dual meaning and therefore limit the topographical veracity of the foundation narrative. The story comes to us from Papohe, who was a younger monastic brother of the two saints. They spent a year in one location on a mountain (*toou*), but then traveled in all areas that were “completely mountainous, like wild beasts.”¹⁸⁰ Here the reference may echo the ideas of 2 Maccabees 5:27 in which Judas Maccabees withdrew to “a desert place, and there lived amongst wild beasts in the mountains with his company: and they continued feeding on herbs, that they might not be partakers of pollution.”¹⁸¹

After a word from the Lord, the three men elect to relocate again, this time by Tahrouj, the modern town of Dayrut. They went to a “mountain of the desert opposite a village” and “found some holes in the rock there and made some small dwellings.”¹⁸² The monastic settlement is in proximity to a village with the desert mountain cliffs nearby. The use of rock holes or caves evokes the language of the faithful in Hebrews 11, and the description makes it clear that the monastics were adapting the natural environment for habitation, just as Macarius had in Sketis. However, unlike Macarius and his survey of the land, Apollo does not seem to realize until later that the community lacks easy access to water. He asks Papohe to dig into the “earth” and see what God will provide.¹⁸³ A natural spring was eventually converted into a well for long-term use, and the presence of the water is described in the *Life* as a sign of God’s favor.

The men then left for a visit to a monk living in the north when they encountered other monastics living on the mountain of Titkooh. The location is specifically described as a place where “God granted his blessing for eternal life.”¹⁸⁴ A further indication of the mountain’s unique qualities is that Phib died here and the other brothers buried him on the mountain. Apollo and Papohe continued on to see Apa Pamin’s community, and then Apollo received a vision from Christ that urged him to return to Titkooh. The narrative grants Apollo authority over the community and places Phib’s body as a further sign that the place is tied physically to Apollo through his affection for Phib. Just as Macarius and Pachomius were given the land as a spiritual inheritance, so too Apollo heard: “stay there, for my Father has given it to you.”¹⁸⁵

Apollo resisted the divine invitation from Christ and eschewed the offer to be tied to the world. Christ's response to Apollo reflects a degree of sympathy for Apollo and other monks who did not wish to be tied to a particular location. In the end, the vision concludes with an elaborate discussion of the architecture of the settlement placing Christ as the general contractor and Apollo as the subcontractor. Christ decrees: "I am with you everywhere; I will give you a great and famous name, and all the people will hear of you and will come to your site for this gift and will worship at your holy place ... See now, I have shown you everything that will happen to you in all the designs of my Father ... I will place great blessings upon your sanctuary in every way and I will have your children called the lamp-bearers of Christ."¹⁸⁶ The holy *topos* is thereby a sanctified place built as a blessing both for God and for Apollo.

The importance of Apollo as a known monastic and his spiritual children born in the mountain reinforces the importance of the desert as a place of fertility and spiritual birth. The same theme of spiritual fertility appears in the Sketis with Macarius as the mother of the monastic communities in Lower Egypt. The mountain as a holy residence with fecundity appears later in the voice of the brothers who rejoice in Apollo's arrival: "This is the mountain of the Lord, the exalted mountain, the established mountain, the fertile mountain. This is the mountain where God has wished to dwell forever. This is the house of God, the dwelling place of the righteous."¹⁸⁷ The monks build a small church over the body of Phib, but it is not sufficient for the needs of those who will eventually come. Christ appears again and directs Apollo to build an even bigger church. In this vision, Christ actually walks the grounds of the site with Apollo, telling the monk its exact measurements. Neither the dwellings of the monks nor the settlement are described in any detail. The *Life of Phib* recounts only the story of two church constructions and the importance of Apollo as the community's leader and Phib's body as a pillar.

The *Life of Phib* and the *History of the Monks in Egypt* therefore provide a broad foundation narrative for Apollo's community. Specific details of the unique features of the Middle Egyptian landscape are missing or entirely omitted. Apollo's community was much further inland, not associated with earlier mining activities, and not linked to any earlier pharaonic or temporary settlements. The importance of salt for Sketis and Nitria makes the natural resource an easy object to highlight as it effortlessly resonates with biblical imagery. Another difference with the Lower Egyptian narrative tradition is that Macarius and Amoun were monastic pioneers. In the case of Apollo and Phib, they were not the first to battle desert demons – they were building on the foundation of earlier, unnamed monks in the region. The difficult work of expelling evil beings had already taken place, but the mountain was not as beautiful and fertile as it could be without the presence and leadership of Apollo. The rhetorical strategy used by the author of the *Life* showcases Apollo's residency

as the direct catalyst for God's pleasure with the monastic community and his decision to reside with the monks. By following the architectural plans and vision of Christ, Apollo was granted the status as the namesake for the settlement. Apollo's leadership at Bawit warranted his elevation in the community's memory as a monastic builder in the late fourth century. However, his community also vanished, like Kellia, after the ninth century, not to be seen as a center of monasticism until Jean Clédat's work in 1901.

Shenoute's Monastic Community in Sohag

Further south in Upper Egypt and west of the modern towns of Sohag and Akhmim, a collection of monastic settlements sits on the west bank of the Nile.¹⁸⁸ In the fourth century a group of men gathered to live together in small communal monastic settlements, while another group selected more modest dwellings in the nearby escarpment. To the south, near ancient Athribis, a group of women lived together in a village monastery.¹⁸⁹ Despite the presence of the Pachomian monasteries on the east bank at Šmin, Tse, and Tsmine, the west bank communities were independent and not subject to Pachomian rule. Together the west bank monastic settlements formed a large congregation or federation (*sunagōgē*), whose legacy was shaped by the leadership and teachings of Shenoute of Atripe (348–465), the community's third leader and namesake for the Monastery of Apa Shenoute (Ar. Dayr Anba Shinūdah).¹⁹⁰

The Monastery of Apa Shenoute is situated in the ancient Panopolite nome, and the capital of the nome was the city of Akhmim, located on the east bank of the Nile.¹⁹¹ Late Antique documentary evidence paints a complex Roman district that had active pagan cults and an ever-growing Christian population, very similar to the situation throughout much of late Roman Egypt.¹⁹² The closest pharaonic site to the monastic settlement is Athribis, located 2 kilometers to the south, and this would become the site for a women's community under Shenoute's authority.¹⁹³ Archaeological remains were visible at the site of the Monastery of Apa Shenoute in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Egyptologist William Flinders Petrie appointed an assistant to survey the area over a two-day period in the early twentieth century and deemed the material to be from the period of Constantine and a monastery, without any explanation for this interpretation.¹⁹⁴ Until recent excavations, the knowledge of Shenoute's legacy was known primarily from the *Life of Shenoute*, his place in the *Synaxarion*, and early editions of some of Shenoute's writings, totaling more than 4,000 pages. Like those of other monastic founders, Shenoute's legacy was shaped by stories that often focused on the extreme differences in his actions from those of others, casting him as an anomalous actor in monastic history. As we will see, he shares much more with his fellow monastic leaders than once thought, and he is taking his place among other founders of Egyptian monasticism.



37. The church of St. Shenoute at the White Monastery in Sohag, Egypt.

According to the *Life of Shenoute*, he entered the monastic life as a child and was instructed in asceticism by his uncle Pjol.¹⁹⁵ By his mid-thirties he assumed the role of archimandrite, or abbot, and remained as head of the diverse community for an impressive span of eighty years. During his tenure he shaped a unique communal monasticism that was entirely his own. His community was far more modest in area than the communities under Pachomian control, but this does not mean his role in Egyptian monasticism was any less significant. In fact, there are several features of Shenoute's life and his contribution to the monastic movement that make him equally important in the development of Late Antique monasticism.

The monastery he established came to be known in medieval Egypt as al-Dayr al-Abyad, or the White Monastery. The title reflects the centrality of the most recognized architectural structure at the settlement even today: a massive ashlar masonry, limestone church, measuring 37 m × 75 m (see Fig. 37).¹⁹⁶ Built by Shenoute around 455,¹⁹⁷ the church stands as a physical testament of his ability to accumulate financial resources and labor to build one of the largest monastic churches of the fifth century, similar in scale to the Pachomian church at Faw Qibli.¹⁹⁸ The church includes a trilobed sanctuary, numerous

carved niches, pharaonic spolia, and figural paintings, and its exterior bears similarities to an ancient pharaonic temple.¹⁹⁹ The church is one of the best-preserved Late Antique Christian monuments, only after the church at Dayr Anba Bishay, the Monastery of Apa Bishay, and known now as Dayr al-Aḥmar, the Red Monastery, located 3 kilometers north.²⁰⁰ The Monastery of Apa Bishay was part of Shenoute's federation, and therefore it is not surprising that the northern community built its own monumental church fifty years later and as a mirror of Shenoute's church, but on a smaller scale.²⁰¹ After Shenoute's church was built, it served as a continual point of reference in his writings as a tangible example for instruction for his monastic and lay audiences. Caroline Schroeder illustrates how Shenoute highlights "the building as a symbol and exemplar of ascetic purity," thereby elevating the church as a perpetual reminder of his and God's teachings regarding proper Christian and monastic conduct.²⁰² Given the enormous size of the structure, Shenoute also needed to contextualize the beauty of the monument within acceptable ascetic parameters.²⁰³ Shenoute justified such a magnificent display of wealth to the community, as Ariel López argues, as an "earned" blessing from God for the unquestioned "ascetic discipline" of the faithful members.²⁰⁴ The church of the White Monastery reflects both in physical form and in rhetorical strategies, within his writings, the profound impact of Shenoute on the legacy of the monastic community outside of Sohag.

The community at the White Monastery offers evidence for studying the longevity of monastic occupation from Late Antiquity until the late medieval period, when the monastery was abandoned, and is currently the focus for a major archaeological study by the Yale Monastic Archaeology Project.²⁰⁵ The historical record is silent as to what factors led to the demise of the community. Sometime in the Ottoman period, Christian families built mud brick homes within the very walls of the great Late Antique church, using the very sturdy walls of the edifice as a protective enclosure for their community. The large church continued to serve the Christians in the area with at least one priest until the late twentieth century. The modern adaptive reuse of the structure was still observed by several visitors to the site until the 1980s, when mud brick homes were removed and a small community of monks was relocated to the site by Pope Shenoute III to reactivate the monastery. Today the community at the White Monastery thrives with the expansion of numerous buildings, a rising monastic community, and a popular feast day in July commemorating the life of Shenoute.

The sources for examining Shenoute and his community in the late fourth and fifth centuries are extensive and varied. We are fortunate to have fragments of more than 200 of Shenoute's sermons and teachings and a smaller collection of his successor, Besa.²⁰⁶ Shenoute's writings offer the largest collection of Sahidic Coptic material for the study of Late Antiquity.²⁰⁷ His writings

include sermons, letters, and monastic instructions. Based on Stephen Emmel's careful reconstruction of the highly dispersed Shenoutean fragments, we can speak of eight volumes of *Discourses*, which include primarily his letters and homilies, and nine volumes of the *Canons*, a collection that offer monastic instruction to his diverse homosocial community.²⁰⁸ In the case of his homilies, Shenoute wrote not just to a monastic community, but rather to a mixed community of lay and monastic listeners, who gathered at the church to hear his teachings. The central reason why Shenoute is not well known is that his works were not transmitted as part of the narratives of early Egyptian monasticism that were circulated in the Byzantine Eastern Mediterranean and in the Medieval Christian West. Thus the Desert Fathers of Kellia and Sketis, along with Pachomius, far overshadow the stories of Shenoute's activities as a foundational leader for Upper Egyptian monasticism. Soon critical editions of his works will replace early twentieth century editions to bring Shenoute more into the pantheon of Egyptian monastic leaders. Scholarship on Shenoute over the last two decades has effectively illustrated his value for the study of Late Antiquity, the rise of monasticism, the value of Coptic sources for historical examination, and Shenoute's place in the canon of monasticism.²⁰⁹

A second source for examining Shenoute's foundation tradition is the collection of Sahidic letters and sermons by Besa (d. 474). They are far fewer in number in comparison to those of Shenoute's, but they have been published.²¹⁰ Although Emmel identified a few of the Besa letters to be written by Shenoute, the bulk of the fragments are Besa's and present an opportunity to assess the legacy of Shenoute's rhetorical strategies for presenting the built environment and its landscape to his audiences.²¹¹ Akin to Shenoute's *Discourses*, the majority of Besa's writings were directed toward the monastics he supervised and in particular address violations of the community's rules. In addition to the amazingly rich corpus of monastic intellectual and theological sources from Shenoute and Besa, a fifth-century Boharic *Life of Shenoute*, attributed to but not written by Besa, offers a hagiographical presentation of Shenoute that includes familiar rhetorical themes.²¹² Shenoute and Besa's works provide a unique opportunity to examine monastic construction and the development of the foundation narrative embedded within the *Life of Shenoute*. Together, the sources allow us to observe the immediate construction of a tradition regarding Shenoute's role as a builder and his prominence as a monastic leader within Upper Egypt.²¹³

Unlike the other founders, whose biographies must be reconstructed from the much later hagiographical sources, the writings of Shenoute and Besa offer near-contemporary sources for writing a biography of Shenoute.²¹⁴ Shenoute began his life as a writer around 380, in his early thirties.²¹⁵ He was still a monk at the time when incidents of severe impropriety prompted him to confront and address his superior, the archimandrite Ebonh, to pursue more effective

action.²¹⁶ Shenoute was dissatisfied with how Ebonh handled violations of the monastic rule, apparently related to sexual misconduct and the stealing of food.²¹⁷ In two letters from *Canon 1*, Shenoute infused his language with biblical metaphors to express his intense concern for the impact of sinful actions left unchecked in the community.²¹⁸ So strong were his convictions that he imposed a permanent separation between himself and the community. He removed himself from the communal setting to a desert dwelling place – from this location, Shenoute could ensure he was far from the sin-infused community below. The desert (*daie*) offered a space that was free from pollution, for Shenoute believed, as Schroeder explains, that buildings could and did reflect the “purity of the monks’ bodies and souls.”²¹⁹

In his early complaints against the community and Ebonh, Shenoute leveled criticism against the archimandrite regarding building projects. Shenoute addressed the community as a whole, imploring them to recognize the misplaced priorities and urged them to replace a love for things with a love for the poor and the needy:

Stop, congregation (*sunagōgē*), taking all that is left over to you due to the blessing of God and spending it on buildings (*topos*) and demolitions, the wages of architects and craftsmen, the luxuries and other things for the workers, so they knead and bring clay and carry bricks to build beautiful and fair houses (*ēi*)! Unless you had a surplus of wealth, you would not take care of all these things that are useless in the moment of your need (i.e., the final judgment).²²⁰

As a monk, Shenoute observed the community participating in construction projects and knew that the money to underwrite the project came from gifts provided by the community’s lay supporters.²²¹ He observed the need to hire laborers, the process of brick making, and the overall architectural planning involved. Not only were buildings made, but some were substantially remodeled in order to make way for new construction. Such activity, in Shenoute’s view, further reflected the damaged state of the community under Ebonh’s leadership – the archimandrite had allowed the devil’s desires to take root inside the garden and destroyed its beauty. By retreating to a desert location, Shenoute spared himself from watching and hearing the sounds of the very tangible mismanagement of God’s ideal plan.

The strong opinions evinced in Shenoute’s letters from 380 are moderated in the later writings by the 107-year-old Shenoute as he celebrates the beauty and blessings of his building projects during his leadership as archimandrite. Nearly seventy-five years had passed since he first retreated to the desert in protest. The sermons in *Canon 7* reflect Shenoute’s thoughts as a leader with several decades of experience. In the first five sermons found in *Canon 7* we learn of Shenoute’s building of the “Great House” (*neinoč nhī*), the limestone church of the White Monastery, along with additional monastic structures,

houses, and washing areas.²²² In the sermon *This Great House*, Shenoute spoke directly of the roughly five months of construction of the church. He highlighted the speed of building as a reflection of God's blessing on the work he carried out.²²³ Emmel has convincingly argued that the sermon marked the inauguration of the church for use.²²⁴ It is fortunate that we have both the built space and Shenoute's reflections on that space available to assess how he presented the built environment to his audiences.

Throughout the first five sermons of *Canon 7*, Shenoute established his sense of place, and thus illustrates his vision of the monastic landscape that he wishes his community to adopt. He linked places to sacredness (purity or holiness); buildings, just like bodies, could become the dwelling places of God.²²⁵ Equally so, dwelling places could be inhabited either by God or the devil and thus everyone should diligently monitor one's actions within the community.²²⁶ The idea that actions create and foster a sense of holiness nicely accords with Lefebvre's theories that generic places are transformed into specific spaces through socially constructed beliefs. Shenoute drew on 1 Peter 2:4 and Isaiah 61:4 to invoke the language that humans are spiritual houses, made from tangible materials, just like the built environments they live in, and they can be abandoned because of neglect or sin of those living *within* the space: "But as for the soul, and also the body or the whole person of those who became desert (*daie*) and who were laid waste (*šōf*), it will be said about them instead of places and cities, 'They will build up the deserted places. As for the ones who first laid waste the cities that are desert, they will renew them forever, and for generations.'"²²⁷ Building alone did not earn God's favor; rather, it was the nature of the individuals in the building: "It is not the ornamentation of the house and the writings that are inscribed on its edifications and its beams that will reconcile us to Jesus if we destroy his members but the souls that become ornaments by purification and that are inscribed in this single commonwealth of the angels."²²⁸ This passage illustrates Shenoute's modified language of what the built environment could mean. Whereas once he would have seen construction as a form of misplaced priorities, as a much more experienced observer of the significance of the built environment for spiritual living, he was able to construct a church and expand his monastery to the glorification of God.

When we look at Shenoute's successor, Besa, we see little trace or commemoration of Shenoute as the monastic architect. However, this may be due in large part to the fact that Besa's letters and sermons are few in comparison to those of Shenoute. In a sermon addressing theft within and outside of the monastery, Besa reports on gossip that might be raised about the community's members by saying those outside will wonder why "the people of Apa Shenoute" are acting in sinful ways.²²⁹ This is the only explicit reference to the monastic population as Shenoute's, and thus may indicate the emerging tradition to elevate the community's identity firmly to Shenoute as the founder.

It is therefore not surprising that the most fully developed sense of Shenoute as a builder appears in the encomium on Shenoute, the *Life of Shenoute*, where we can observe the development of the community's later identification with Shenoute after his eighty years as archimandrite. The date of the composition of the *Life* is difficult to pin down. As Nina Lubomierski has argued, Besa, who is attributed with authorship, could not have written the *Life*, although some Sahidic fragments exist that suggest some form of an early hagiographic tradition existed in the century after Shenoute's death. Later Boharic, Ethiopic, Syriac, and Arabic versions exist and offer fuller and more elaborate recounting of Shenoute's deeds while archimandrite.²³⁰ The *Life* also shows the impact of Shenoute's legacy for the subsequent generations, as it would be read on his feast day in July.

With the *Life of Shenoute* we can observe similar patterns of constructing the monastic landscape through those who lived and experienced the buildings associated with the community, perhaps generations after the life of Shenoute. The accounts allow us to think in comparative terms with the accounts associated with Pachomius and with Macarius. The author of the *Life* prepares his audience for Shenoute's ascendancy to greatness as a monk and a builder in the opening story about his selection for the monastic life as a young boy. An angel appears to Shenoute's uncle, Pjol, while the boy sleeps, and states: "Truly he will be a righteous and illustrious man, and after him, no-one like him will arise in any country. He will build a monastery, and to everyone who enters his place will he be a comfort and a protection; his community will endure for [all] generations."²³¹ Shenoute's holiness provides him with the capacity to build the monastery and to create a thriving monastic legacy. In the next scene, Shenoute hears that he will become "archimandrite of the whole world," further solidifying his future as a leader for the community and a role model for all monastic communities.²³²

Two other stories from the *Life* relate specifically to Shenoute's building projects and the two most prominent Late Antique features at the site of the White Monastery still visible today: a red brick well and the limestone church of Shenoute. The first story recounts Shenoute's authority over the natural environment and building materials. After workmen began digging the well, part of it fell onto the workmen. Given the depth of excavation needed, the incident warranted Shenoute's attention and he was summoned immediately to the scene. On his arrival, he pierced the wall of the well with a palm branch and a tree sprouted and helped stabilize the well; "[f]rom that day to this, the well has never moved again."²³³ The story follows an account of piercing in which Shenoute created a hole in a rock for a ship mooring. The rock, like the well, was also still visible at the site as a sign of Shenoute's miraculous interactions with the natural world – he could pierce rock with his bare fingers and he could stabilize the walls of a great well by planting a palm branch. Together

the stories fuse Shenoute to the physical artifacts of the monastery and its identity – a theme that occurs again and again in hagiographical sources.

The construction account of the White Monastery's church occurs shortly after the recounting of the pierced rock and unmoved well. The narrative begins with a familiar setting between Christ the architect and a monastic contractor. Christ gave a clear directive to Shenoute: "Arise, and measure out the church and the foundation of the monastery, and build a sanctuary in my name and yours."²³⁴ The church and monastery are not Shenoute's glory alone but also Christ's, for together they will share in the blessings of the building project. Shenoute also receives his divine endorsement as the founder of the monastery, despite the fact that he had two predecessors, Pjol and Ebonh. However, Shenoute did not have the resources to undertake such a large campaign. Christ directed the archimandrite to go to his "dwelling-place in the desert" and pick up anything along the way, as it will help fund the building project. The author of the *Life*, perhaps anticipating that his monastic audience would know that Antony had a similar encounter along a desert path in which he needed to resist the devil's snares, has Christ reassure Shenoute that it is not the "devil's doing" but rather Christ's and he will provide the means to "build the church and the monastery in accordance with [his] will."²³⁵ After a night of prayer in the inner desert, Shenoute walked back to the monastery and found a container with gold or some other item that would help underwrite the expense for the church construction.²³⁶ The story concludes with a further reminder to the audience that Christ and Shenoute worked together to plan the church and the monastery: "They went off together and laid out the foundation of the sanctuary. My father then arranged for the workmen and craftsmen, the stonemasons and the carpenters. They worked on the church, and with the Lord helping them in all that they did with everything they needed, they completed it."²³⁷ Shenoute fulfilled the prophecy that he would build a great monastery and church with divine assistance, much as Apollo was directed at Bawit.

By the mid-sixth century, Shenoute's place as a monastic founder was well established in Egyptian monastic writing, as exhibited in the *Panegyric of Abraham of Farshut*. Abraham would be the "last Coptic orthodox (non-Chalcedonian) archimandrite" before the federation's demise.²³⁸ In the *Panegyric*, Abraham is positioned as a "good son"²³⁹ following the laws and guidance of his "holy fathers of the federation (*koinōnia*):" Apa Pachomius, Apa Petronius, and Apa Shenoute of the "mountain" (*toon*) of Atripe.²⁴⁰ The inclusion of Shenoute was not insignificant, but deeply intentional, for "after the demise of the Pachomian federation during the middle of the sixth century," writes James Goehring, "the federation of Shenoute filled its place in the history of Upper Egyptian Coptic orthodox coenobitic monasticism."²⁴¹ The hagiographical tradition points toward a need within the history of Upper Egyptian monasticism to lay

claim to Shenoute. The laws that he and Pachomius established formed a foundation that Abraham was compelled to follow and maintain.²⁴² In describing “our ancient fathers and forefathers, that is, Apa Pachomius and Apa Shenoute and Apa Petronius and Apa Horsiesius, the fathers of the world,” the author of the *Panegyric* was not merely grafting Shenoute into a Pachomian legacy, but rather offering an institutional history of the region that did not differentiate between “Pachomian” and “Shenoutean” monasticism.²⁴³ While Pachomius’s community vanished, the two male monasteries of Shenoute’s federation continued for at least another 600 years. The author of the *Panegyric* contributed to the crafting of an Upper Egyptian landscape with two equally significant founders: Pachomius and Shenoute.

CONCLUSION

The generalized monastic landscape as found in the literary sources discussed in this chapter is a carefully constructed set of stories to explain how the first monastics settled the wilderness, whether it be a mountain, a cave, or a sparsely populated town. The distinctness of where monks built was never in doubt. In many cases, the desert was a near place, and the monastic settlements were visible. The account of Elias, who lived in the desert of Antinoe, nicely illustrates the generalized divisions: “He was famous for having spent seventy years in the terrible desert. No description can do justice to that rugged desert in the mountain where Elias had his hermitage, never coming down to the inhabited region. The path which one took to go to him was so narrow that those who pressed on could only just follow its track with rough crags towering on either side. He had his seat under a rock in a cave.”²⁴⁴ The account illustrates the fierceness of the desert as a land to be feared and one that is not considered viable for habitation. It stands in juxtaposition to the inhabited areas. The visitors in this story know how to find Elias, and the description of the rock overhangs might be specific enough to help pilgrims know they had taken the correct path to the ascetic.

The whole purpose for moving to new places and establishing residency was to create a new city or village dedicated to God. The athletes of Christ went to the physical arena of the desert and mountains to wrestle with demons, which claimed the territory as their own. By drawing on Classical and Hellenistic athletic imagery, monastic authors effectively replaced the gladiatorial arenas with desert arenas. The Egyptian arena held its own unique challenges. Monks needed to have access to water, to stay out of the sun, and to live in harmony with villagers. They also needed to be reminded that in the midst of the desert God, the Virgin, and Christ were willing to dwell beside them. The narrative accounts provide a social history of how particular individuals were

attributed as founders for seeing the land for the first time and for laying claim to an abandoned cave, mountain, village, or quarry for the honor of God. By building wells, dwellings, churches, and towers, the monks marked the land in general ways.

The divine spaces of the desert became monastic places. Macarius built his dwellings for his children in Sketis. Amoun built his residence at a quieter spot in the desert. Both Apollo and Shenoute walked with Jesus as he divinely outlined the churches in their respective communities. And Pachomius built wall after wall to set monks apart from nearby villagers. The generalized landscape that emerges from the words of the monastic hagiographers comes from the periods when monasticism thrived in Egypt. From the sixth century onward, monastic communities witnessed increasing popularity, and new settlements emerged alongside the original settlements. It is this world of the sixth century that we must turn to see the physical reality of where monks were living and how the actualized, monastic landscape differed from the generalized landscape found in monastic stories.

SIX

THE ARCHAEOLOGY OF LATE ANTIQUE BUILDINGS IN EGYPT

IN THE *SAYINGS OF THE DESERT FATHERS*, ABBA ZENO TURNED TO HIS DISCIPLE, who had asked for guidance, and wondered what words to offer him. The young monk wanted to travel to Kellia, for he had heard marvelous stories about the monks who lived there. He wondered if his doubts about the monastic life might dissipate if he moved to that community. He struggled to follow the prayers and habits of Zeno and found himself doubting whether he was at the best community to foster his asceticism. Abba Zeno sensed the restlessness of his companion. He finally settled on these words: “Do not live in a famous place, do not settle close to a man with a great name, and do not lay foundations for building yourself a cell one day.”¹ Evidently Zeno’s words were entirely ignored, as hundreds of monks *did* move to Kellia and worked with great men, such as Evagrius, and built hundreds of foundations for multiroomed houses. Descriptions of monastic settlements as found in the textual sources thereby offer only an impression of where monks lived and the communities they built – the generalized, monastic landscape or monastic mindscape. We will see that the archaeological evidence presents an essential body of evidence to amplify the cursory references to monastic settlement designs. In many cases, the evidence speaks to the revitalizing of abandoned or underpopulated areas, reflecting the type of resettlement activities of Pachomius.

This chapter and Chapter 7 present an overview of a selection of diagnostic monastic settlements occupied from the fifth to ninth centuries. Read together, the sites graphically demonstrate the reality of monastic settlement

patterns that is at odds with the stories found in early monastic literature of living at a famous place or putting down roots. Monastic settlements are all about rootedness in the landscape, and the archaeological evidence from Late Antique Egypt illustrates this clearly. This chapter begins with an introduction to the materials used for building structures and then analyzes evidence for Roman, Byzantine, and early Islamic housing to see what the built environment looked like outside of monastic settlements. To offer a point of comparison, I then discuss the material remains from the first large-scale excavation of a Byzantine monastic site, the Monastery of Apa Apollo in Bawit, to trace the parallels and clear differences between monastic and nonmonastic settlements. In part, this chapter demonstrates a proclivity of monastic builders to enhance traditional house designs to reflect the sense that the space *was* different from the homes they once inhabited in the villages, towns, and cities. In some cases, the changes are slight, such as the dwellings nestled in the cliffs, natural caves, and abandoned tombs as monks adapted preexisting spaces. Where they built settlements anew, the complexes are elaborate and echo the styles, decorations, and features of villas from the early Roman period in Egypt.² With this chapter we establish a foundation to appreciate the great diversity of forms and designs that are exhibited in a select group of monastic sites in Chapter 7. Together, Chapters 6 and 7 offer convincing evidence for the need to further revise perceptions of the monastic built environment and temper the rhetorical narrative of poverty, unskilled labor, and disengagement from the world that reflected the generalized landscape but not the actual landscape of Late Antique Egyptian monasticism.

BUILT ENVIRONMENTS

The monastic sites discussed in this chapter and Chapter 7 represent different expressions of Egypt's monastic built environment. I use "built environment" as an inclusive term that embraces all forms of construction and modification from the minor application of plaster to a natural place, such as a cave, to an entirely new purpose – built monastic settlement. Such language is not new, but explaining why it is adopted is important when discussing built material that comes from very different kinds of communities.

Tom Bartuska presents four components of the built environment that I consider applicable for identifying categories for both monastic and nonmonastic settlements.³ First, the built environment includes "everything humanly created, modified, or constructed, humanly made, arranged, or maintained."⁴ The monastic built environment shares the essential quality of being anthropogenic, like all other settlements. Monastic structures can and should be part of a more comprehensive, architectural understanding of the built landscape of Late Antiquity and the medieval world, and not regarded as fundamentally

different types of construction from other built environments. Second, it is the product of human desires and needs, and therefore serves them. The individual qualities of any built environment are manifested through the desires of the architects and clients. For monastic communities, the central desire was to construct a settlement for the specific purpose of homosocial living in dedication to God. The spatial configuration of the settlement, the modifications employed within, and the physical boundaries of any given site bespeak the desires for physical autonomy from other nonmonastic settlements. Third, the built environment changes the natural environment in order to create some comfort for the occupants. Early monastic scholarship accentuated the motif of wild monks living in the deserted wilderness of the Near East as a reoccurring theme for highlighting the “otherness” of monastic living, without any basis in physical remains.⁵ The evidence for Egyptian monastic built environments is plentiful for illustrating how monastics, even solitary ones, sought to modify the environment for comfortable living. Fourth, the parts that make up the built environment are contextually based, meaning “each and all of the individual elements contribute either positively or negatively to the overall quality of environments both built and natural and to human-environment relationships.”⁶ Monastic built environments include a wide array of distinctive elements, such as churches, cemeteries, sleeping quarters, storage, kitchens, vegetable gardens, cisterns, and spaces for hospitality, that are planned in relationship to the natural environment and the needs of the community. Not all settlements contained the same features, but individually each component altered the environment by tapping into the water table, increasing the spaces for agriculture or animal husbandry, and transforming the natural environment into a humanly modified one.

All four of these characteristics of the built environment are evident in monastic sites, and therefore it is important to articulate first what the range in forms is for the built environments and then to return to examine these characteristics in greater detail. I deliberately begin my analysis with a larger monastic settlement, which was undoubtedly built for the purpose of monastic living, as these structures contain the most recognizable features or markings of monastic habitation. By beginning our examination of the built environment with an unquestioned monastic settlement, I will identify specific characteristics that provide certainty of the designation. From this foundation, we can better assess settlements that contain fewer of those elements and explore how it is possible to identify other settlements as monastic and not something else, such as a military encampment, a temporary shelter, or a lay village.⁷

Buildings were made primarily built (*kōt*)⁸ by raising walls (*cōbt*, *joe*; Gk. *toichos*)⁹ of sun-dried mud bricks (*tōōbe*, *ome*; Gk. *pēlos*), such as those still evident at Dayr al-Bala'yazah in Middle Egypt (see Fig. 38).¹⁰ Brick makers combined Nile mud with straw, bits of limestone, and sand.¹¹ Several wooden brick molds



38. Monastic settlement at the site of Dayr al-Bala'yazah in Middle Egypt showing the various terraces leading up to the desert escarpment.

that exist from the pharaonic period demonstrate how brick-makers shaped the clay that was laid in the sun to dry.¹² Easily accessible throughout Egypt from the alluvial banks of the Nile, mud bricks were used instead of stone (*ōne*; Gk. *lithos*),¹³ which was common for Mediterranean homes in the Aegean and mainland Greece. Egypt's arid climate and the generational knowledge for how to use the earth for various construction projects fostered a continuity in construction that was never fully replaced by the Greek or Roman preferences in the Northern Mediterranean. Fired bricks (*terpocē*; Gk. *plinthos*),¹⁴ a hallmark of the later imperial Roman housing, were adopted only sparingly.¹⁵ Fired or baked bricks needed to be purchased in advance, as they needed to be fired in a kiln.¹⁶ Building in stone required different skills and staff for quarrying, stonecutting, plastering, scaffolding, and design. In contrast, a major benefit for building with mud bricks is that construction was relatively quick, used readily available resources, and required limited labor.¹⁷

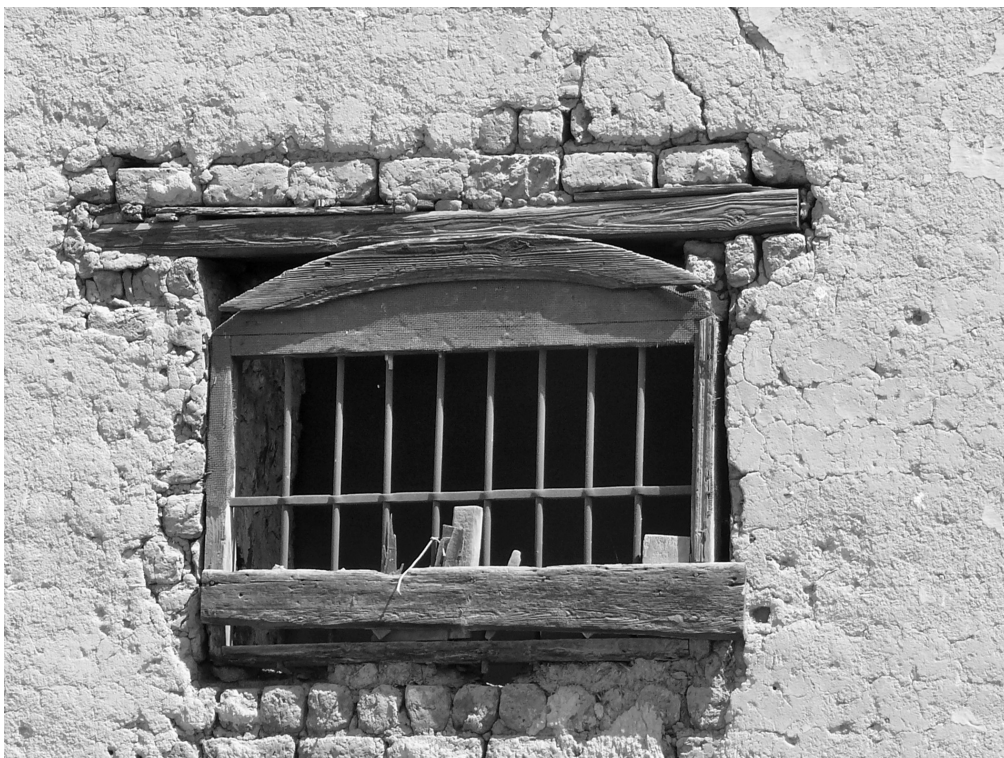
Mortar (*temdahet*; Gk. *thuiā*), usually made of mud, held bricks together for construction or covered rough groove-quarried walls. The mortar, in turn, was covered with a more substantial layer of lime plaster or some other sealant on both interior and exterior walls, ceilings, and floors (see Fig. 39). If mud brick walls are left untreated, they and the entire building would be at the mercy of the elements. Thus, plaster layers could be a few centimeters thick, with a



39. Plaster and organic flooring at the Monastery of Apa Jeremias at Saqqara.

high percentage of sand to help give the layer longevity, especially on floors, entrances, and lower regions of walls. A variety of features such as doors (*ro*, *sbe*; Gk. *thura*, *stoma*),¹⁸ internal and exterior staircases (*tōrt*; Gk. *anabathmos*),¹⁹ windows (*šoušt*; Gk. *thuris*),²⁰ and cisterns (*šōte*; Gk. *phrear*)²¹ would provide spatial divisions between rooms (*ri*; Gk. *kellion*)²² in a house (*ēi*; Gk. *oikos* or *dōma*) (see Fig. 40).²³ Interior walls could be pierced with cupboards, small closets, and niches made by the insertion of wood (*še*; Gk. *sanis*),²⁴ mud bricks, or broken pieces of pottery (*blje*; Gk. *ostrakon*) (see Fig. 41).²⁵ Houses ranged from one to three stories in height and were built against the exterior walls of other houses. Central staircases granted access to individual rooms or apartments in housing complexes that joined individual homes together and led to finished roofs where additional activities could be performed, (see Fig. 42). Staircases also served to help divide spaces and provided boundaries for property in contracts.

The above features and their materials were all used by builders, masons, carpenters, and plasterers to create living environments for Late Antique communities. In the following section I survey examples of domestic, residential housing to look closely at the private house of the residence, for this offers the greatest point of commonality between the monastic built community and that of a town or village. In moving away from the fixation on monumental



40. Modern wood frame window insert at a contemporary mud brick house in Minya, Egypt.

architecture, I seek to shift our focus from the hegemonic components of a site map or plan to the often overlooked areas of daily life.

BUILDING ROMAN, BYZANTINE, AND ISLAMIC HOUSES

The excavated city of Karanis in the Fayyum offers an excellent example for starting to view the spatial configuration of an Egyptian town and its houses.²⁶ The University of Michigan excavated only a portion of the 60-hectare site in the early twentieth century, and it was one of the first projects to truly excavate stratigraphically so that the majority of the finds could be located within a secure context.²⁷ The settlement includes hundreds of mud brick, multistory residences, built against each other and lining streets that lead to Ptolemaic and Roman temples.²⁸ The well-preserved homes easily allow any visitor to the site today a glimpse into the layout of a second- and third-century CE town at its greatest extent, although the town was inhabited through the fifth century CE.²⁹ Karanis is just one of many towns in the Fayyum with a rich archaeological and documentary record for town planning. Additional cities of the Fayyum, such as Tebtunis and Theadelphia, offer similar benefits for studying domestic life, architectural design, and social engagement with buildings.³⁰ And



41. Mud brick niche built into the wall at a Late Antique construction at Ansina, near Antinoöpolis, Egypt.

until the recent excavations at Tebtunis, the history of domestic architecture and property management could be studied only through the papyrological sources from a few towns in the region³¹ and select archives from larger cities and nomes such as Herakleopolis, Hermopolis, and Oxyrhynchos.³² This is the reason why Simon Ellis says the housing in Late Antique Egypt is not well known; we lack substantial archaeological excavations at Late Antique settlements for comparison.³³ Although the houses at Karanis are earlier than most of the monastic sites discussed in this book and the site does not have any evidence of monastic installations or of churches, the excavated houses and the layout of the town help us gain a sense of the physical building techniques used in Lower Egypt and the Fayyum for a 60-hectare town.

The papyri also offer an account of those involved with construction, inspection, and design. We also learn from Greek papyri that many of the builders, masons, plasterers, and carpenters were part of guilds, at least in the larger cities.³⁴ Papyrological studies dedicated to the social and economic impact of landholdings and the individuals involved with these properties are fueling successful efforts to revise, correct, and enhance older theories about Byzantine Egypt, the transition to the post-Classical age, and its agrarian history.³⁵ In



42. Plastered staircase made of mud brick. Stairs lead from the ground floor to the roof of the monastic dwelling at Kellia-Pherme.

addressing topics such as the relationships among local agents, administrators, property, and agriculture, we are learning that Late Antique Egypt showed greater continuity with earlier centuries as “the papyrological evidence for the period down to the early years after the Arab conquest give us no warrant for thinking that any great changes had occurred in the character of the villages since the transformations of the third century.”³⁶ Since the comparably dated archaeological sources are scant and there do not seem to be major changes in the fabric of the settlements after the third century, we can use the existing archaeological sites as the best guides for a difficult situation in comparing private, nonmonastic housing to monastic settlements.

Egyptian house registrations, or census accounts, detail a complex structure of property ownership for landlords. A late second-century registry for a mother named Tasoucharion lists her property and that of her two children. Among the three of them, they owned four entire houses, a percentage (33–50 percent) of five different houses, and twelve courtyards.³⁷ A set of rental agreements from Herakleopolis lists specific rooms, thereby offering a view to

the interior of an urban home.³⁸ The house includes a pantry for bread, a bedroom, and a vaulted cellar.³⁹ Bread was placed in a nearby room located on the house's terrace. Many homes used pantries to store flour and grain, in addition to bread, for later use.⁴⁰ Larger homes of elite individuals had water tanks⁴¹ and specific rooms set aside as kitchens;⁴² the majority of Egyptian homes did not have kitchen facilities, as the cooking happened primarily outside in an oven in the courtyard or on a roof terrace.

Eighth-century private wills from Jeme, in Thebes, detail specific rooms in homes that were granted to individual family members. The stairway provides the boundary marker between properties. Elizabeth is given the "room beneath the stairs" and a dining room, whose door opens onto the stairs. All owners of property in the housing unit share access to a foyer, a water container of sorts, and the staircase.⁴³ The deed articulates exactly where the new resident shall reside and where she may engage or inhabit common spaces with other building residents. Numerous papyri attest to the common use of a staircase as a natural boundary for dividing up larger buildings. In many cases, houses were buildings that had been divided up, much like modern condominiums. They were not necessarily owned by individuals. In looking at the archaeological record and house plans, it is worthwhile to remember that rooms or sections of houses were sold, leased, or inherited. The presence of an interior staircase did not necessarily mean that all the rooms in the building were part of a single-family-unit house.

Kom el-Dikka: An Urban Residential Neighborhood

Excavations of Late Antique residential quarters in cities and villages such as Alexandria,⁴⁴ Elephantine,⁴⁵ Jeme, Karanis, Saqqara,⁴⁶ Soknopaiou Nesos (Dime),⁴⁷ and Tebtunis demonstrate common elements of houses such as open courtyards, the use of flat roofs for domestic activities, and the minimal use of stone outside of urban areas. The history of Alexandria, Egypt's largest urban settlement, presents an excellent example of commercial and domestic housing built in stone. At Kom el-Dikka, almost at the center of ancient Alexandria, a Polish mission has excavated the largest Roman and Byzantine area since the 1960s.⁴⁸ The earliest houses were built in the first century CE and were destroyed by the late third century, possibly by an earthquake.⁴⁹ From 1993 to 2001, the Polish mission excavated one of the first examples of a rare peristyle house with a courtyard, a triclinium, latrine, staircase, and a water tank.⁵⁰ The house bears several signs of Greek and Roman construction and design including the use of isodomic masonry with limestone blocks (50–53 cm width and 40–50 cm height), the use of marble tiles for flooring, and a mosaic floor.⁵¹ The walls were covered with plaster and then painted with large rectangular panels akin to Pompeiian styles.⁵² This house, and others like it, were filled in with



43. The Late Antique residential and commercial area of Kom el-Dikka in Alexandria.

debris and built over in the fourth century with the construction of a theatre, a portico, and a new residential quarter, the latter dating from the early fourth to the mid-seventh centuries.⁵³

The existing housing quarter includes seven residential complexes (Houses A–H) located on the east side of a large north–south road and bisected by two east–west side streets (see Fig. 43). The complexes have several rooms, between eight and ten, with the first floor being made of limestones and lime mortar.⁵⁴ While the units are described as houses, it is important to remember that the papyri demonstrate individual rooms and parts of houses could be leased, bought, or even divided through inheritance. Therefore, though our definition of a house is a cluster of rooms designated as a residence of related individuals, either by blood or status – slave or free – the reality is that exterior walls do not make units of individuals in the same way. This seems to be particularly true, as the ground-floor rooms contain artifacts reflecting a variety of trades, and thus we are looking at a cluster of individual artisans and business people associated with the use of glass and stone.

The complexes share similar building methods and thus were likely constructed relative to each other. This is supported by the presence of a

sophisticated sewage system running throughout the district, underneath the houses, thus indicating the urban planning of architects and hydraulic engineers working together. The presence of a public latrine on one of the side streets reveals that the area was designed not just for those who resided in the rooms on the second and third stories but also for clients, customers, and general visitors to the area. Staircases granted access to the upper stories in House D, the best-preserved of the complexes thus far excavated.⁵⁵ While the first floor was built in stone, the upper levels were made from more traditional materials used elsewhere in Egypt: sun-dried mud bricks, palm tree beams, reeds, and mud mortar all covered with a limestone plaster.⁵⁶ In discussing how many individuals may have resided in these structures, Christopher Haas offers wise caution that we cannot estimate the number of persons in these dwellings: “Even if the precise number of rooms set aside for domestic use were known, it is impossible to quantify the number of inhabitants per room (and thus for the entire house). It is equally difficult to make pronouncements concerning the social structure of such a household.”⁵⁷ Haas suggests that if each room averages 3×3 meters, then there could easily be more than twenty persons living on the second story.⁵⁸

Two rows of six rooms flank the interior, open-air courtyard. At midpoint in the courtyard, the north face of the south wall has a painting of the Virgin and Child.⁵⁹ The painting is a rare example of early Christian painting from Alexandria; its presence in a primarily commercial and domestic space is considered unusual for the lack of similar comparisons in nonmonastic, domestic spaces. How should we interpret the presence of the painting in this semipublic/semiprivate space? The painting and two associated iron posts for holding hanging lamps or incense burners led Mieczysław Rodziewicz to assert the space was a house *oratory*. In fact, he admits that at first the painting alone led him to believe he had found a monastery; as more material was excavated, it became clear that it was a nonmonastic residence for Christians and not a monastery.⁶⁰ Certainly the space could be used for *paraliturgical* purposes for workmen and residents in the upper stories. The few examples of preserved Christian wall paintings from Alexandria make it difficult at this point to ascertain how unusual the Virgin and Child panel is. The temptation to regard it as an oratory relates to the same composition of image, walls, and lamps found in many private monastic quarters; however, in these settings, the paintings are within an interior room of a house and not exposed to the elements.

While Kom el-Dikka and the houses in this area of the site have generated a lot of discussion about the nature of domestic space, other cities in the Nile Valley also have domestic quarters, but they are made primarily of mud brick. For example, the Roman city of Antinoöpolis supported a large urban population and served as a regional capital for the Thebaid down to Aswan.⁶¹ Excavations at Antinoöpolis led by an Italian mission show the city had several

churches and Late Antique structures.⁶² The city expanded in the fifth century to the south to include a Late Antique settlement known as Ansina, which was recently surveyed.⁶³ Built primarily of mud bricks, protected by a boundary wall, and including several churches, the site appears to be a stand-alone Christian village or suburb.⁶⁴ The description of the area in the fifth century, offered by Palladius, is one that contains twelve female monasteries. If so, it would be the only area known in Egypt to have a district dedicated exclusively to female monastic communities.

Jeme: A Town Reclaims an Abandoned Mortuary Temple

The residential settlement of Jeme offers an example of a Late Antique town that is very different from the residences at Kom el-Dikka. All of these features are well attested at the Late Antique city of Jeme, built within the precinct of the pharaonic temple of Ramesses III, known more commonly as Medinet Habu. The town covered an area of at least 27 acres within the walls of the large mortuary temple (see Figs. 24 and 32). One of the central courtyards of the temple was converted into a church, complete with carved stone Christian iconography. The buildings of the town of Jeme were made of mud brick, and in some cases they were three stories high. When Uvo Hölscher led the excavations in the early twentieth century, he recovered more than 2,000 ostraca and hundreds of papyri in the complex of adjacent mud brick buildings from the seventh and eighth centuries. The layout of the houses, built against one another, with cellars, wells, staircases, and courtyards, inform our reading of the legal documents regarding these buildings (see Fig. 44). Terry Wilfong's engaging study of the women of Jeme illustrates the complex family interactions while highlighting the role of women in a Late Antique town. The division of the houses within Jeme involved monastics and church officials; in many cases the legal documents offer insight into how private property served to foster several legal relationships between monasteries and lay Christians in Jeme.

Without the physical remains Hölscher excavated at Medinet Habu it would be almost impossible to conceive of the density of the town's urban planning and estimate its relative population in Late Antiquity. The documentary evidence is vital for understanding the buildings of the town, for in the wills, bills of sale, and disputes we learn of monastic property ownership extending out of the monastery into the town. We read of women and men inheriting partial buildings and courtyards, remodeling many of those features, and gifting some properties in Jeme to the monks in the mountains of Jeme. There is a significant fluidity, at least as far as Jeme's evidence attests, between monastic and nonmonastic property, construction projects, and the inheritance of buildings throughout the region of Thebes in Late Antiquity. In the case of Jeme, ownership of property was not the exclusive rights of nonmonastics. Monasteries



44. Detail of the three-story mud brick residences at the Late Antique town of Jeme at Medinet Habu in Thebes, Egypt.

and individual monks followed the same type of legal procedures to bequeath, divide, sell, and rent property.

For instance, in 724, Paham, a monk and priest who lived in the Mountain of Jeme, watched his eldest son, Papnoute, marry a woman with a blemished past. Despite Paham's deepest wish to save his son from the bad alliance, the marriage soured and resulted in some type of separation in which Papnoute needed a place to live with his children. Paham offered his house to his son, but quickly Papnoute and his children died, perhaps due to the plague of 724.⁶⁵ Paham set about immediately to legally block an attempt by Papnoute's widow to seize the house. Writing in 725, Paham outlined what his other son, Jacob, would inherit.⁶⁶ The properties described in the testament nicely illustrate the nature of Egyptian houses and courtyards. The first property was built by Paham's grandfather, who bequeathed the property to his son, Epiphanius, who in turn granted it to Paham. This is the house that Paham wants Jacob to have, although there are older disputes regarding walls that were built while Paham was away from Jeme. He urges his son to consult with an architect before he does any additional building, so that further complications do not arise. The second property is not an entire house, but a third of a house that Paham inherited from his mother. Located in another part of the village, this property includes a third of an adjoining courtyard. In both cases, the house and courtyards will belong to Paham until his death, at which point his son will inherit the right to the land and buildings. Paham is a monk and lived with a community in the Mountain of Jeme.⁶⁷ But, he did not relinquish his ownership of property in the town of Jeme. Although the *Sayings of the Desert Fathers* and other monastic sources accentuate renunciation as a characteristic of asceticism, "the extent of the disposal and the degree of unanimity on the topic [absolute poverty] found in the early literary sources is in fact literary."⁶⁸ Private property for monks and monasteries was not prohibited within Egyptian monasticism, therefore authors wrote to "instruct their readers in the dangers of private property and the need for detachment from it."⁶⁹

The testament is one of many legal documents relating to property from Roman, Byzantine, and early Islamic Egypt. The Greek and Coptic papyri and ostraca complement the archaeological remains at our disposal to reconstruct the features and spatial divisions of buildings; open spaces, such as courtyards; and ownership, whether from inheritance or sale.⁷⁰ In order to assess how monastic houses compare to those of nonmonastic dwellings, we will look at the methods of construction, decoration, and design of houses such as those described by Paham. In looking at houses in nonmonastic settings, we will be in a better position to assess the points of similarity and departure between Egyptian houses and settlement design with the monastic examples.

Tebtunis: Mud Brick Houses Remodeled

Tebtunis was a town of 50 hectares and had a monastic community located northwest of the great temple of Soknebtunis in the Fayyum.⁷¹ Excavations began at the site in 1899 with the sole objective of recovering papyri. Bernard Grenfell and Arthur Hunt were not disappointed, as they recovered an estimated 30,000 fragments.⁷² In the process, they also excavated a small church and associated mud brick buildings that they identified as a monastery. The results of this excavation were never published except for a small article on the paintings.⁷³ Stratigraphic excavations, which began in 1988, are led now by a joint French–Italian mission and the site’s value is clear, with archaeological remains from the pharaonic Middle Kingdom until the ninth and tenth centuries of the medieval period.⁷⁴

Excavations in the northern areas of the site have revealed a large residential quarter with homes dating to later, underrepresented periods in the archaeological record thus far. The Roman-period houses, in particular, show an expansion of new areas of settlement, similar to the expansions seen at Antinoöpolis and at Karanis. In all three cases, the settlements were expanding into previously unused portions of the towns. The numerous houses, and the dated pottery from within, offer a good sample of Byzantine houses from fifth- to sixth-century houses and later ninth- and tenth-century houses of the Tulunid or Fatimid period.⁷⁵ One example is House 10, whose walls run 9.5 meters east to west and 13.8 meters wide on the north–south axis.⁷⁶ The house of the Byzantine period is made of mud bricks and some reused blocks, with wooden beams used as reinforcements for windows and doorways. Parts of the house have large cut stones (average size of 90 × 46 × 32 cm) with older mortar still attached. The mud bricks (average size 27 × 14 × 7 cm) are gray and bonded with a yellow mortar. The ceramic evidence from the house helps secure a date of the fifth or sixth century for construction.⁷⁷ The ceramic assemblages include numerous examples of cooking wares that date to the late sixth century. The transition to the seventh- and eighth-century period provides more materials allowing us to examine the elements of house construction, materials, and design.⁷⁸

The house had two staircases in the sixth century. The staircases were later modified to include storage areas under the stairs. The two staircases are common to many of the houses at Tebtunis and may illustrate that the house was divided into at least two, if not more, sections. In the seventh century, gray mud bricks, measuring 25–26 × 12–13 × 6–7 cm, were laid on their beds with the same yellowish mortar observed in earlier housing.⁷⁹ Limestone pavers provide a threshold between rooms, at the entrance to the house, and to the stairs. The house had at least eight rooms, two staircases, and, at one point, four small cylindrical silos (0.80 m diameter, 0.63 m height).⁸⁰ The storage silos

were made of mud bricks and coated with mud mortar. Final modifications to the house in the eighth century show a shift to using fired bricks in the base of the walls, topped by limestone blocks around the major facing of walls and doorways. The remaining sections of the walls are made in the same way as in the previous period: gray mud bricks and yellow mortar.

The house has a single entrance, 1 meter in width, on the northwest corner, granting access to a foyer that opens to the largest room of the house, 3.5×11 meters. From this room one can take a staircase in the northeast corner to an upper story or head directly south to a set of five rooms with a second staircase. In the rooms on the south side, rooms 4 and 12 hold a large bread oven (2.9 m diameter). Despite the addition of the bread oven, the four silos were removed from the home.

The houses at Tebtunis all have a least one staircase, a reception room entered from the street that grants access to the interior spaces, roofs made with palm beams and mats, and niches. The design of the houses is uniform for the later period, with an average dwelling area of 250 square meters and the widest rooms not spanning beyond 3–3.5 meters. The excavators posit a practical reason for this; the palm tree trunks used as roof joists could not span a wider distance without undermining the strength of the floor or terrace above.⁸¹ Two rooms in House 10 contained fallen roof beams and reed mats from the tenth-century roofs of the additions on the east side of the house.⁸² The two rooms were a significant departure in form from the earlier house, as the walls were more irregular and had their own small stoves and benches. The roofing and lack of any associated staircase illustrate that these were single-story and single-roomed residences attached to the earlier structure. Houses rarely possessed a courtyard, toilet installations, or windows. Courtyards connected sets of houses that shared common exterior walls.⁸³ Without windows in the walls, natural light could come into the room only through small ceiling windows. If they did exist, they were not sealed with glass, as the recovered glass fragments represent blown forms such as cups, lamps, and goblets.⁸⁴ Without windows, the rooms could receive natural light only from small openings high on the wall that might also provide ventilation to the first-floor rooms. Additional light sources would be from oil lamps, and signs of such use are still visible on the walls near a niche.

An important aspect of domestic architecture and daily life is the presence of cooking facilities. In the Egyptian context, bread ovens (Ar. *fūrn*/pl. *afrān*) and a small stove (Ar. *kānūn*/pl. *kawānīn*) appear often in open areas, due to the relative heat that such features could generate. At Tebtunis, the cooking apparently took place either on the terraced roofs or outside the home in the courtyards. Ovens at Karanis are found almost exclusively in courtyards and in associations with granaries.⁸⁵ Bakers made bread in connection with the larger granary facilities, where wheat was stored and milled.⁸⁶ The eighth-century

buildings at Tebtunis brought a change in the interior design, and we begin to see the addition of *kawānīn* with a room within some single-room dwellings, and larger ovens. The addition of a massive bread oven in House 10 signals a significant shift in the purpose of a room and possibly the function of the house. The oven measures 2.5 meters in diameter, filling the entire width of the room and covering half of its length. The room is deep inside the residence, and a baker would need to pass through four internal doorways before reaching the 2.9×4.5 meter room. The oven is built against the north wall and its flue is open to the south. Without windows, the only way for heat and smoke to leave the room would be through the adjacent stairwell, directly west of the baking area. Given the fact that most ovens found in domestic settings average a floor diameter of 60–90 cm, the oven in House 10 is more than twice the size and therefore likely a bakery for bread production; it is too large to be needed or even managed by one, two, or even three families.⁸⁷ The presence of dung in adjacent rooms in the house adds further support to the interpretation that this was a bakery. The dung can be used for making dung cakes to help fuel the fire and allow for longer-burning fires. Dried in the sun like mud bricks, dung is an economical fuel and readily supplied by the animals kept by the family for the community.⁸⁸

The houses at Tebtunis, therefore, share similarities with other Late Antique residential quarters. In the Fayyum, both Soknopaiou Nesos and Karanis have homes with multistory domestic housing, but the towns did not persist after the fifth century. Better comparisons to Tebtunis's Late Antique areas include many contemporary monastic settlements and the ninth- and tenth-century residential quarters at Iṣṭabl 'Antar (Fustat) in Cairo or at Saqqara, a few hundred meters north of the remains of the Monastery of Apa Jeremias. At Saqqara two houses were excavated between 1993 and 1996 that were occupied from the seventh to the tenth centuries.⁸⁹ The houses are made of mud bricks and covered with white plaster and a 20-cm-high red painted band at the base of the walls. Neither house had a courtyard, but the two houses apparently shared a courtyard that joined the two domestic areas.⁹⁰ One of the rooms includes a silo for holding grain and a food preparation area including fish bones, nuts, pomegranates, figs, onions, and corn.⁹¹ In an open space by a second house, a food preparation area included egg shells, date stones, and figs. The second phase of occupation, from the ninth to tenth centuries, dates the houses after the decline of the monastery to the south. In the seventh century at Iṣṭabl 'Antar, builders were rapidly increasing the number of houses, made with fired bricks, in the urban district and dividing already existing houses into additional residences.⁹² A significant shift in building practices happens in the eighth century, as demonstrated in the change in composition and manufacturing techniques of bricks. Sun-dried bricks replace the fired bricks of the early period and they include a wide array of inclusions such as straw, bone,

wood, limestone chips, pebbles, and vegetable matter.⁹³ The mud brick walls were protected with lime plaster, now very necessary since the fired bricks were no longer in use. Some residents decorated their walls with geometric patterns in red paint, as polychrome painting was not employed.⁹⁴ The use of red paint appears also at Tebtunis,⁹⁵ where simple crosses were painted on the walls of interior rooms, and at Saqqara, where walls had geometric and floral patterns in red and gray.⁹⁶ The floors were made of mud bricks and sometimes covered with lime plaster. Similarly, at Tebtunis, the houses had mud brick flooring that was covered with yellow plaster. The yellow hue also appears in the mortar, thus indicating a regional difference in lime sources compared to those available for Iṣṭabl ‘Antar.⁹⁷

In all the examples of domestic housing we see the importance of doors to close main entrances to homes. Doors took a variety of forms, being made from lightweight mats or palms, or from wood. Sturdier wooden doors could be locked from the inside the house. Wooden and bronze keys were used to open these locks, and many examples exist from the medieval period.⁹⁸ Doors could also be removed and easily stolen or moved to new houses on purchase or lease.⁹⁹ Most houses had some type of open windows that offered ventilation and natural light. Many were simple oval or circular openings or rectangular windows that were closed by shutters. In rarer cases, windows might have glass panes held in place by plaster mortar. In excavations of nondomestic homes, there is little evidence to demonstrate the use of window glass. The residents at Karanis, for example, closed their windows by using wooden shutters attached to framing units made of timber cross beams.¹⁰⁰

Many houses exhibit signs of remodeling and of later reoccupation after a period of abandonment. In some instances, buildings were deemed unsuitable for habitation or abandoned outright and then reinhabited.¹⁰¹ When more units were needed, rooms were easily divided by walls and other slight modifications made with earth or mud bricks. As James Keenan illustrates, this process was not necessarily due to a widespread decline, but rather to an aspect of the natural expansion and contraction of towns due to a variety of factors.¹⁰² Physical signs of abandonment may include the presence of middens in interior rooms, subsequent wall plasterings that do not reach the floor level, and the blocking of doors and windows by brick courses that differ significantly from the wall's courses.

Methods for decorating the interiors of the built environment involved a limited range of plasters, usually white, sometimes with a yellow or gray hue. Paint, usually red or yellow, both of which were easy to make and obtain, was used to design a range of decorations from well-executed panels to unskilled crosses and lines applied with a finger or a brush. Some houses had cooking facilities such as a floor *kānūn* or a bread oven, but in most cases, these structures were located in a community courtyard or along the exterior wall

of the residence. Niches and cupboards held belongings of the residents, and in rare examples some were painted, such as at Karanis and Amheida. In sum, Egyptian housing was made from readily available materials, and little regional difference exists save for the greater use of stone in Alexandria and other coastal cities of the Mediterranean, and changes in hue to the mud from various locations along the Nile Valley.

In considering the evidence from Alexandria, Jeme, and Tebtunis, as examples of nonmonastic settlements, all the sites share common characteristics that reflect the properties that an eighth-century monk, such as Paham, would grant to his son and his grandchildren. Nonmonastic housing was made primarily of mud brick, except for those in Alexandria and, in rarer cases, the homes of elites. All buildings could be divided in a variety of ways to be sold or inherited. Courtyards, mills, and bakeries, just as examples, were also divided and owned by several individuals. The archaeological evidence does not, unfortunately, offer indications of these divisions in a tangible way, and thus we must be aware that a physical building does not, in itself, mean that all who lived within the house were related or shared in the decisions for remodeling or selling. The insertion of a wall, the closing up of a window, or the tearing down of a wall might all be reflections of legal disputes between various owners in a single building or courtyard and not reflecting changes purely in the functionality of a space. The selling and dividing of built residences is important, especially in a modern age when our perception of the built environment is framed by a concept of the “single-family” home that was not a part of many ancient cultures.

WHAT DOES A MONASTIC HOUSE LOOK LIKE?

The houses within monastic settlements are not often regarded as domestic or household sites. Rather, the presence of a church and the notion of a monastery as an exclusively nondomestic settlement have placed the physical architecture in a unique category by itself. The religious and sacred nature of many of the activities linked to the residents within monastic grounds brings a level of *differentness* to the interpretation and description given to monastic spaces. The settlements and the individual buildings themselves have been traditionally regarded as religious or sacred sites simply on the condition of their location within a monastic settlement, but how different are these buildings from those outside a monastic community? One could argue that the very nature of the monastic life, in theory, is that the boundaries between sacred, religious, communal, private, and secular are firm and visible. The monastic movement sought to be away from the world and to be alone. But in reality, the boundaries were blurred. Monastic literature offers plenty of examples to illustrate

how the monastery and the monk's cell create a heaven on earth, but the same spaces were also areas for a variety of activities that are not shaped or dictated by liturgical, paraliturgical, or even personal, religious behaviors.¹⁰³ The question is then to what degree could we read monastic spaces as comparable to other densely occupied residential settlements and not as significantly *different* from other constructed communities, such as those described earlier.

Religion and spatial theorist Kim Knott explains the importance of assessing the relationship between space and the locations of religious life in drawing on the earlier work of Henri Lefebvre in *The Production of Space*.¹⁰⁴ In what follows, I outline how one might see religious space according to Knott's heuristic readings. To interpret the monastic built environments, we could consider the "'spatial practice' (perceived space), 'representations of space' (conceived space) and 'spaces of representation' (lived space)."¹⁰⁵ What would this mean in practical terms as we compare the nature of the monastic built environments with those outside monastic areas?

The *perceived space* is the monastic settlement in its entirety. It is understood, over generations, that monastic communities have spaces for liturgical events and monks, as living angels, who provide the most accessible connection to God on earth. Visitors and pilgrims then "depend on the prayers of these monks as if on God himself," according to the author of the *History of the Monks in Egypt*.¹⁰⁶ Late Antique travelers made the journey to Egypt because something unique and unusual was happening at these new settlements. Christians *perceived* the areas to be different in a fundamental way in part because the monks are described as living citizens of heaven, unaware of evil in the world, and "awaiting Christ like loyal sons watching for their father, or like an army expecting its emperor, or like a sober household looking forward to the arrival of its master and liberator."¹⁰⁷ The cells, houses, and workshops of the monastery comprise the *conceived space*. It is a space that reflects the aims of monastic leadership by using funds from the monastery's holdings and donations from pilgrims to build structures for the community. In many cases, new structures were also built to offer better accommodations for the increase in the numbers of visitors to the monasteries. For some monastic communities, the investment in monastic building helped support the visitors and the expansion of the community. Finally, the buildings for the monks and those who live in the settlement contributed to the *lived space*. This is where religious beliefs may be less evident. The following description of the monastic residences at Bawit is an exploration of the lived spaces with an eye to describe physical spaces and consider their physical nature objectively and to classify what, if anything, may make monastic space monastic. Is there anything inherently religious or different about these spaces and those found in expressly nonmonastic settlements?

Monastic Residences at Bawit

The Monastery of Apa Apollo (Ar. Dayr Apa Apollo) is a settlement situated roughly 15 kilometers inland, west from the Nile in Middle Egypt at the site of Bawit.¹⁰⁸ The site is south of al-Ashmunein (Coptic, Šmoun) in the ancient Hermopolite nome and located on the west bank of the Nile. Its distance from the Nile means that river travelers, even during the inundation, could not see the monastery from their boats. Today, the settlement sits equidistant between the new Desert Road, a highway that takes travelers away from the numerous towns and villages that flank the Nile, and the modern village of Bawit, to the east, and the town of Dashlut. Despite the current impression that the monastery was physically isolated from water and land routes, the community, as attested in the reconstruction of the monastery's archive with more than 700 documents, was engaged in long-distance trade and participated in the affairs of the surrounding monastic communities throughout Egypt.¹⁰⁹ The location of neighboring monastic settlements such as the Monastery of Abu Fana (Dayr Abu Fanah),¹¹⁰ the monastery at Dayr al-Dik¹¹¹ to the north, and Dayr al-Balā'yzah and Wadi Sarga to the south indicate that monks at Apa Apollo's community at Bawit were part of an extensive monastic network in Middle Egypt.¹¹² Documentary evidence and some dipinti may suggest the community also had ties with the Monastery of Apa Jeremias at Saqqara.

The early twentieth-century excavations at Bawit offer substantial evidence to trace the legacy of Apollo with a wealth of artifactual, visual, and epigraphic evidence dating between the sixth and ninth centuries. Greek and Coptic textual evidence linked to Apa Apollo's community in the Hermopolite nome mentions the "Mount of Titkooh," whose exact location is not known, but is often considered to be in close physical proximity to Bawit.¹¹³ In her discussion of the topographical issues surrounding the monastery and its associations to Bawit and Titkooh, Sarah Clackson presents a persuasive case to speak collectively of the "Hermopolite Monastery of Apa Apollo" to allow for the broadest interpretation that "Bawit and the Titkooh monastery were one and the same."¹¹⁴ Clackson also notes that Titkooh is not identified as the location of the Monastery of Apa Apollo in the texts excavated from the site. This is an important distinction, because some texts do speak of the monks of Apa Apollo from Titkooh. The people of "Titkooh were evidently known" and the site may have been a village very close to the monastic settlement, which later became known as Bawit.¹¹⁵ A further difficulty arises in the fact that the hagiographical presentation of Phib and Apollo, as outlined earlier, does not pinpoint the exact location of their settlement. With two monasteries in the region bearing the name of Apollo, there is a limit to our ability to precisely locate a community that may date back to the first generations of monks who lived by Apollo and Phib, or were inspired by them to create a settlement.¹¹⁶

When Clédat began work, he selected the center of the large mound, or *kom*, at Bawit for further soundings and cleared twenty-eight “funerary chapels.”¹¹⁷ The majority of the structures were painted with images of Egyptian monastic and Biblical figures (Christ enthroned, Virgin and Child, Apostles, Baptism of Jesus, etc.).¹¹⁸ Walls were inscribed with Coptic graffiti and painted with dipinti. During his first season, Clédat reported that he was uncertain if he was excavating a monastic settlement or a Christian necropolis.¹¹⁹ The construction and painting of the buildings reminded him of the necropolis structures in the western desert at Bagawat. If Bawit was a necropolis, in Clédat’s view, it was likely linked to a monastery because of the number of inscriptions mentioning fathers (*apa*). He also found inscriptions that mentioned the “Monastery (*monasterion*) of Apa Apollo.”¹²⁰ In addition to these impressive finds, his first season also revealed the location of two churches he labeled as the “South Church” and the “North Church.”¹²¹ The churches contained impressive carved stone architectural accents, wall paintings, and inscriptions. In addition to soundings at the central mound, Clédat, also made an investigation of a nearby cliff, located 450 meters to the west, and identified several structures on the summit that he called “tombs.”¹²²

Despite following the standard for the early twentieth century, many scholars have found it vexing to extract more material from early archaeological publications that are more akin to preliminary reports than definitive accounts of the work undertaken. H.-G. Severin, in his study of the sculpture from the churches at the Monastery of Apa Apollo, explains the difficulty faced by archaeologists trying to work with the earlier archaeological publications:

We do not know the extent of the buildings, nor can we ascertain whether the main concentration of the total complex was then found and excavated ... Since building phases and even rebuildings ... were almost without exception not observed or even documented at the time, we have no clues as to the relative chronology of the complex.¹²³

While one may read the early reports on Bawit and desire greater detail on ceramic material, middens, and occupation strata, the volumes were published with the same modern concerns for such material and attention to detail found in reports for ancient sites. Additionally, since Bawit was one of the first Byzantine period sites to be excavated in Egypt, Clédat had little to turn to for establishing any relative chronology, and therefore his catalog of the individual rooms provided the first substantive study and perhaps, for his time, the first progressive documentation of a Byzantine site in Egypt.

The site was left dormant after Maspero’s 1913 season until the Egyptian Antiquities Organization resumed work for three seasons of excavation in 1976, 1984, and 1985, and produced additional materials that were housed in the Coptic Museum in Cairo.¹²⁴ Excavations at Bawit resumed with a joint

mission of Institut français d'archéologie orientale (IFAO) and the Louvre, nearly 100 years after Clédat's first sondages.¹²⁵ The current project involves the first scientific excavation of the site, including a subsurface survey of the entire settlement; the collection of samples for archaeobotanical analysis; and the documentation of ceramic, glass, and other small finds retrieved through stratigraphic excavations.¹²⁶ The excavations in 2003 and 2004 provided more reliable evidence for dating the settlement's genesis to the sixth century.¹²⁷ The discovery of a large basilica church (21 × 40 meters) and previously undocumented monastic buildings promises to offer better evidence for understanding the history of the site. For example, the excavation at the new basilica illustrates that the central church was in use until the tenth century, thereby extending the life of the Christian community by a few centuries.¹²⁸ Impressive examples of Bawit's wall paintings, sculpture, and wood are on display at the Louvre and also at the Coptic Museum in Cairo, with many comprehensive studies now in print involving both collections.¹²⁹ Documentary evidence, such as ostraca and papyri, was collected during the early excavations, but then scattered into private hands and a variety of institutions. The painstaking work of reconstructing the Greek, Coptic, and Arabic documents for publication began in 1999 with the work of Sarah Clackson and followed by projects by Anne Boud'hors and Alain Delattre.¹³⁰ The publication and analysis of the Monastery of Apa Apollo's ostraca and papyri are also enhanced by corrections and revisions to earlier published dipinti, graffiti, and inscriptions from Bawit.¹³¹

The earliest foundation for the community is still clouded by mystery. Despite the desire to employ the account in the *History of the Monks in Egypt* as a basis for placing the foundation in the late fourth century, we simply lack the archaeological evidence to defend the early foundation for the site.¹³² The site as it is understood now is composed of two central areas. At the core is a large mound that contains hundreds of monastic buildings. A boundary wall enclosed the entire settlement, though its full extent was never traced and only partly visible on the subsurface survey on the western edge of the mound and on the south. The second area is to the west of the major settlement mound and consists of more modest monastic buildings, a church, and a collection of tombs in the cliffs.¹³³

The entire community had at least four churches – one in the cliffs and three below on the plain. The South Church was decorated with excellent examples of Late Antique sculpture carved in stone and wood, and served as the first visual window into the richness of excavating monastic churches.¹³⁴ Despite Clédat's desire to place the South Church in the fourth century, H.-G. Severin's 1970s study of the church's sculpture persuasively argued for a later date based on his comparative analysis with carved sculpture from other churches in Egypt. Severin allowed for the possibility of a fifth-century foundation for the structure, and regarded the structure's use in the sixth and seventh

centuries as evidence for the last phase of construction.¹³⁵ The North Church, which is smaller and more modest than the grand South Church, was made of fired and sun-dried bricks and not decorated as elaborately. The later date for the North Church is more certain, as it includes a partition that divided the sanctuary from the nave, known as the *khūrus*. As an architectural component not observed before the second half of the seventh century, it is a diagnostic architectural feature for dating church constructions.¹³⁶ Church D was recently uncovered, measuring 21 × 40 meters, and sits at the center of the site.¹³⁷ Its size indicates that the structure was more likely the central component of religious life at the settlement, with the two smaller churches playing subsidiary roles. A similar site design with a large basilica at the center of the settlement appears also at a monastery of Monastery of Apa Jeremias at Saqqara.

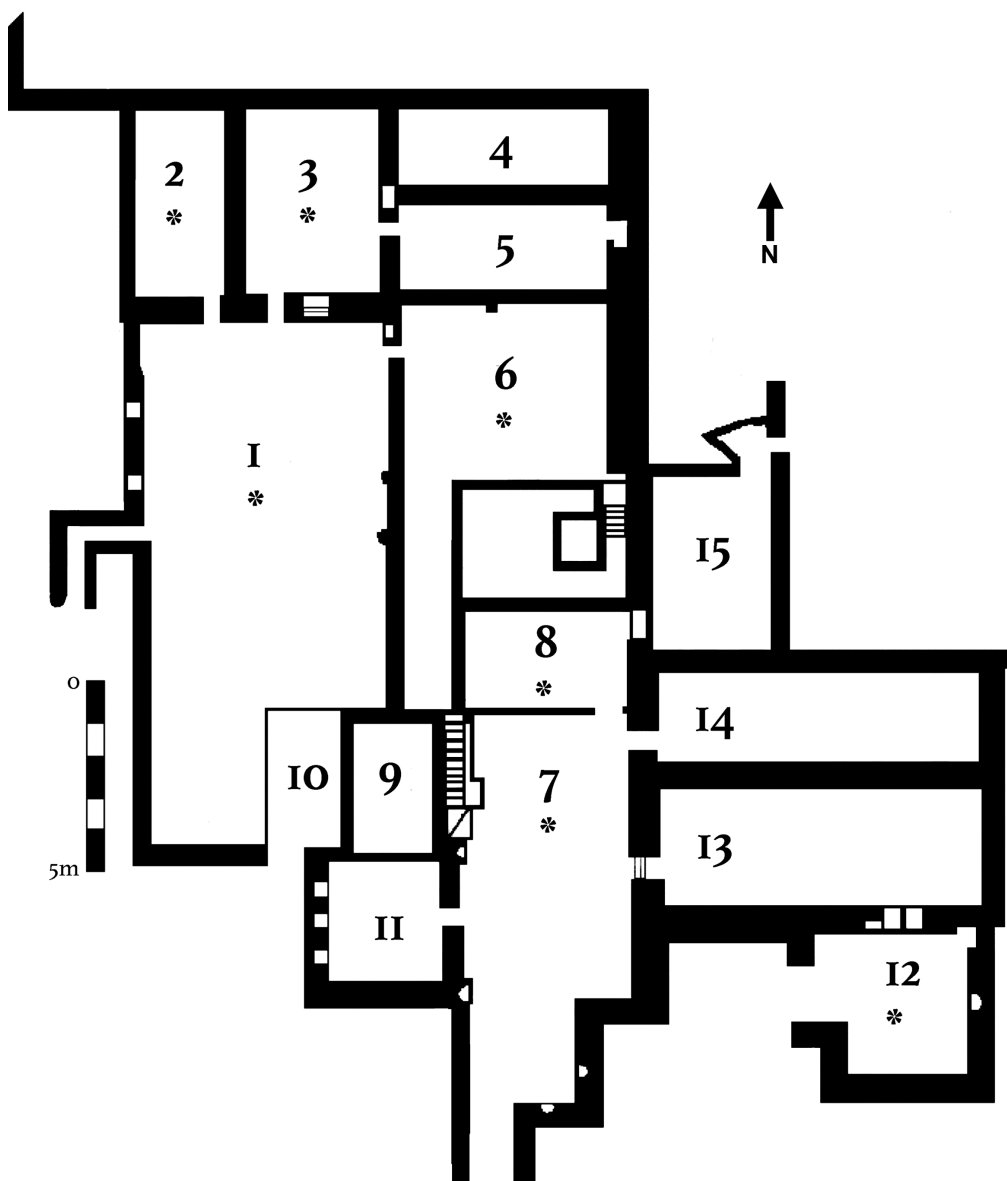
The bulk of the dated material, such as dated inscriptions (from the seventh and eighth centuries),¹³⁸ documentary evidence, and ceramic evidence place the community's active occupation between the sixth and tenth centuries.¹³⁹ In many cases, however, given the disjointed nature of the buildings excavated,¹⁴⁰ our understanding of the settlement's history has been greatly enhanced by the early twenty-first-century research and excavation led by the joint IFAO–Louvre project. The idea that monastic communities built settlements, akin to small villages or towns, never surfaced in the written assessments of early Egyptian monastic archaeology. The inability to conceive of the sites as settlements with a domestic component is not the product solely of antimonastic or anti-Coptic bias by early archaeologists. Instead, the disinterest was shaped more by a lack of general interest in settlement archaeology in the field for any period site, including ancient and medieval settlements.¹⁴¹ Whereas now landscape studies and settlement archaeology are the norm, the field of archaeology in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries was committed to the documentation of monumental architecture, the recovery of textiles and manuscripts, the clearing of tombs, and the acquisition of physically impressive monuments for museum displays and patrons.¹⁴² The general infancy of settlement archaeology as a body of knowledge therefore limited how archaeologists might conceptualize a monastic settlement. A further factor was the inherited notion that monastics did not build dwellings that rational individuals would inhabit. Thus, the Monastery of Apa Apollo, and later as we will see at the Monastery of Apa Jeremias at Saqqara, presents evidence that early excavators struggled to understand. They did not have the benefit of the historical framework of the documentary evidence to contextualize how building regulations, ambivalence by governing elites, and private sales and donations would create ideal conditions for such developments.

The physical remains from the Monastery of Apa Apollo are invaluable. However, a historical framework is necessary to contextualize the presence of such a significant monastic building project as the Monastery of Apa Apollo

and how the settlement fits into a wider setting of construction from the sixth to the tenth centuries. Given the fact that we do not know the monastic rule that the community followed, it is essential to examine the physical remains to ascertain an understanding of the community's life and how it mirrors the historical setting of monastic building projects during the Byzantine and Islamic periods.¹⁴³ As recounted earlier, Middle Egypt provides a unique body of both textual and archaeological evidence to complement the historical narratives of political events playing out further north in the Delta. It is through the physical remains and the documentary evidence that we can see the monastic planning involved in the construction of the communities. The evidence from the Monastery of Apa Apollo spans from the sixth to the tenth centuries and includes inscriptions written in Greek, Coptic, and Arabic, thus conveying the multilingual nature of the monastic community during the generations.

A few general observations are necessary about the location of the Monastery of Apa Apollo. First, the location of the site was not directly associated with any ancient necropolis or a domestic settlement.¹⁴⁴ The comparatively few funerary stele found at Bawit suggest the monks built in an area not used for the commemoration of the dead in the Late Roman or ancient Pharaonic period.¹⁴⁵ Second, the settlement did not repurpose earlier structures. The Monastery of Apa Apollo is therefore an entirely new settlement to the area. Third, at a distance of 15 kilometers from the Nile, the settlement was not visible from the river, yet this fact did not exclude the monastery from an active role in the area. The monastic archive suggests the community collected taxes, oversaw monastic estates, sold wine, and prepared pickled fish.¹⁴⁶ Letters and accounts all point to an economically healthy community associated with Apa Apollo. The dated dipinti and papyrological evidence, based on palaeographical grounds, places the settlement of the Monastery of Apa Apollo in the sixth through the ninth centuries.¹⁴⁷ Although only a fraction of the site was excavated, a wealth of wall paintings, architecture, small finds, and documentary evidence speak to a very active monastic community in the Late Antique and medieval periods.¹⁴⁸ In what follows, the discussion of the physical remains is limited in large part by the preference by the excavators to report in greater detail about those buildings, such as the churches and the highly decorative painted rooms, rather than those rooms without decoration. For example, Clédât's report of the first sixteen rooms he cleared at Bawit only included discussions of eight of the rooms, for the others did not include paintings, graffiti, or any objects of interest to him.¹⁴⁹ Therefore, our ability to understand the relationship between Chapels 1 through 15 is limited by speculation about how the undecorated spaces may have related to the whole complex (see Fig. 45).

What physical components are present at Bawit to illustrate that the inhabitants were indeed monks and that the spaces that were excavated belong to a monastic community? The seventy completely excavated buildings, of the



45. Monastery of Apa Apollo, Chapels 1–15 excavated by Jean Clédât. Asterisks indicate rooms described in the publication because they were decorated with painted scenes. The other rooms were not discussed by Clédât.

ninety identified, present a variety of structures that contain several features of a monastic settlement to further clarify that the settlement was a monastery. Since there is such a long period of occupation at the site, it is almost impossible, based on the earlier reports, to discern distinct phases of occupation, and certainly little evidence has been found of any settlement before the late fifth or early sixth century. But we can examine the residences as expressions of final



46. A chapel excavated by C. Palanque in 1903 on the west side of the monastic settlement at Bawit. The rooms show the connecting barrel vault over the chambers, a low bench or bed built against the wall, and an east niche.

phases at the Monastery of Apa Apollo and consider what features illustrate a complex monastic settlement design of the sixth through ninth centuries.

Building materials at the Monastery of Apa Apollo are similar to those used at nonmonastic sites. The majority of the residential structures were built of sun-dried mud bricks with the walls, both interior and exterior, covered with plaster (see Fig. 46). Some windows and doorframes had wood or stone supports to stabilize the features or as expressions of taste; more often doors and windows, with sloping sills, were made with mud bricks and plaster. Some windows at Bawit were elaborately painted and illustrate that all surfaces were considered potential canvases for bearing religious images such as peacocks (see Fig. 47). The walls of the rooms at Bawit exhibit a high quality of design and color to offer unique programs throughout the site. The near-ubiquitous use of painted programs would be an indication that the settlement was not a lay village, but was in fact a monastic community. Most rooms were finished with a white plaster and painted with two or three registers of multi-colored geometric and figural programs, often displaying male saints with a few women, such as St. Thekla in Chapel 56 (see Fig. 48). In addition to these monastic rooms, the community also had kitchens with bread ovens and stoves, kilns for pottery production, metallurgy workshops, lodging for animals, and



47. Peacocks adorn the south tympana of Chapel 43 with two windows at Bawit.



48. Row of equestrian saints with St. Thekla in Chapel 56 on the west wall at Bawit.

the three churches.¹⁵⁰ These features could also be found in a town, and thus we need to ask the question of how we can know that these elements are part of a monastic settlement and whether or not they were funerary in nature.

The first debate about the nature of the settlement came with Maspero's assessment of the settlement as a monastery, rather than a necropolis, as asserted by Clédat. His view was supported by André Grabar, who doubted Clédat's identification of the site with a funerary cult, meaning it was purely filled with martyria and not used as a living community. Grabar persuasively argued for the importance of painted rooms for daily living by members of the community. They should not, he argued, be seen as special, commemorative spaces.¹⁵¹ He disagreed with the notion that the rooms were set aside exclusively for prayer, rather Grabar regarded scenes of the Ascension, the Theotokos, and Christ in Majesty as part of the visual landscape with which the monks surrounded themselves while undertaking daily activities. He nuanced the importance of the images by stating that they were used to inspire monks during their day-to-day activities and not used only during the commemorative days for particular saints.

In 1955, Hjarmer Torp published a study on Bawit that reopened the debate about the nature of the cells.¹⁵² His architectural study was a progressive step forward in analysis of the material as he drew together image, text, and architectural design to consider the settlement as a whole. His main body of monastic material consisted of the excavated chapels at the Monastery of Apa Apollo and the comparanda from the Monastery of Apa Jeremias at Saqqara. With this body of material, Torp reconstructed a new interpretation of how monastics used the rooms. He referred to the cell, with its painted programs and associated dipinti, as underscoring the rooms as places for mortification where the monk was able to die, thus leaving his sinful life and assuming the angelic life with other saints.¹⁵³ Torp also explained that the barrel vault was necessary not for practical reasons, but rather to mimic a canopy or *dais* that would remind monks that they were living in a heavenly realm. To support this interpretation Torp uses the ideas of religious geography from Cosmas Indicopleustes, who regarded heaven as a vault above the earth.¹⁵⁴ Drawing on other funerary sites such as Meir, Tunah al-Gebel, and Bagawat, Torp argued that the notion of a vaulted space as a tomb was inherent in Egyptian architecture. For Torp the belief that the monastic cell was a tomb with the ability to bring new life was vividly evident in how Christ's tomb at Golgotha was also a source of the resurrection.¹⁵⁵

Inconsistent documentation and mapping of the early twentieth-century excavations conducted at the site hampered the development of any relative chronology for the site until now. Torp, who, like Severin, worked extensively with the early, published reports, estimated in the 1950s that only 5 percent of the monastic site had been uncovered through excavation.¹⁵⁶ Torp's estimate

was accurate and patently confirmed by the recent geophysical survey in the 2000s. The recent magnetometric survey provided the first comprehensive view of a 40-hectare, large-scale monastic settlement and for the first time located the positions of the buildings excavated and cleared by Clédât, Palanque, Maspero, and the Egyptian Antiquities Organization.¹⁵⁷ The use of archival excavation notebooks, published plans, topographical mapping, and now magnetometric survey has allowed scholars to correctly place prior excavation areas (such as Clédât and Maspero's excavations) and to possibly locate entirely undocumented excavations that were not planned on the map of the site. Other geophysical surveys, such as surface surveys and topographical mapping, have added to the insights gained by the subsurface documentation of the spatial configuration at Bawit.¹⁵⁸ Additionally, survey work undertaken in the western cliffs demonstrates that the monastery also supported a more rural community where monks could adopt a more solitary form of monastic, independent living with their own church.¹⁵⁹ The dwellings are modest in comparison with the richly painted homes in the communal settlement built below. Both the church and the residences in the cliffs are later eighth-century constructions. A later date for the noncommunal settlement may reflect the evolution and expansion of the community and forms of ascetic practice in the post-conquest periods and a desire to relocate from the settlement below. The cliff settlement was occupied at the same time as the construction of the North Church at the communal settlement.

Reading the Archaeology of Bawit

In order to start rereading the material at Bawit, I want to begin by looking at how the community described its built environment in the texts applied to the walls of their buildings. A look at a set of buildings at the north end of the settlement will illustrate the vital importance of dipinti for helping to understand the built environment and the monastic nature of this settlement. In 1913, Maspero excavated a collection of rooms scattered across the site that he labeled as "halls" (numbered 1–45) to differentiate from the "chapels" (Roman numerals I–LVI) excavated earlier by Clédât and Palanque.¹⁶⁰ One set of rooms, located at the northwest end of the mound, included a set of rooms with an open-air courtyard (Hall 2); a small chapel (Hall 1);¹⁶¹ a long hall with a low stoop along the west wall (Hall 5);¹⁶² and a second, larger rectangular hall (Hall 6) with more than 340 inscriptions, a low stoop, and impressive geometric designs on the east and west walls.¹⁶³

Hall 6 provides interesting evidence for exploring how we might read Egyptian monastic spaces. Apa John, a professional craftsman, painted the walls of the vaulted hall with twenty multicolored panels of symmetrical geometric designs, a niche with Christ in Majesty, and elaborate floral panels.¹⁶⁴ Each

geometric panel was unique and illustrated the artistry of a complex pattern designer and skilled painter. A single niche, set apart with small, plaster-molded columns on the east wall, included two zones of painting. The lower one shows an enthroned Virgin Mary with Christ, flanked by the twelve apostles and two Egyptian saints. The upper register, which fills the curvature of the niche, is a scene of Christ in Majesty. He sits upon a bejeweled throne within a mandorla with the four incorporeal beings as part of a flaming chariot.¹⁶⁵ Two angels frame the scene on either side. The niche is outlined with a band of thirteen medallion portraits of the twelve virtues.¹⁶⁶ Above the niche and the geometric panels, monks painted a band of trim of intersecting rose garlands and alternating triangles.¹⁶⁷ Apa Elias and Apa Paphnoute, perhaps colleagues of John, had prepped the walls and vaulted ceiling with plaster and assisted John with the painting of the hall. All three master craftsmen painted the long hall and then painted two dipinti bearing their names on the walls of Hall 6.¹⁶⁸ In large green letters in a dipinto painted on the east wall Apa John states that he was judged worthy to paint and plaster. Similarly, Elias and Paphnoute left their names on the west wall stating that they plastered the vault (*kēpe*) and served as painters.

In their prayers, the three monks direct their petitions to the “Angel of this Vault” (*paggelos ntikēpe*).¹⁶⁹ Maspero was the first to comment on this unusual invocation as a sign of satisfaction by monastic painters in the building of their settlement.¹⁷⁰ Five other dipinti from the walls of Hall 6 also address the “Angel of the Vault.”¹⁷¹ One dipinto (no. 59) is part of the painted program like the dipinti painted by John, Elias, and Paphnoute. Shoi, the “Father of the Cell” (*piōt ntri*), left the intercessory petition.¹⁷² He may have asked Elias or Paphnoute to paint the prayer, as they also mention him as the “Father of the Cell” in their prayer (no. 60). The “Father of the Cell” is one title that is used at Bawit that includes a sense of the spatial organization of the settlement. The expression is used a few times at Bawit and thus may reflect the title of specific monastic fathers in the community.¹⁷³ The identifier, *pa tri* (“one of the cell”), occurs once in Chapel 19, which is a possible variant of the *piōt ntri* designator.¹⁷⁴ The related title of “Father of the *topos*” occurs twice.¹⁷⁵ These titles all suggest that the physical space of the cell or room was a qualifier to differentiate individuals in the community.

Maspero classified the four other prayers addressing the Angel of the Vault as graffiti. Apa Psha, a carpenter, prayed to the Angel of the Vault for himself and all the other carpenters, presumably those in the community. He surrounded his prayer with a black rectangle to set it apart from the other dipinti on the west wall of Hall 6.¹⁷⁶ Two of the three remaining dipinti were offered by Elias and John (possibly the painters). The third dipinto was commissioned for a woman named Helen and her son Palaou. Three other inscriptions in Hall 6 refer to the “Angel of this place (*topos*).” Taken together, the references

acknowledge the space as distinct from the other spaces at Bawit. Invoking the “Angel” of the physical space also appears in three other rooms where monks address the “Angel of this place” (*topos*)¹⁷⁷ and the “Angel of this dwelling place” (*manshōpe*).¹⁷⁸ The only decorative element accompanying the invocations to an angel is found in Chapel 12, where a small winged child or angel is accompanied by the caption “Angel of the Dwelling.”

Additional epigraphic evidence comes from throughout the settlement to illustrate that the inhabitants referred to their structures at least thirteen times at eight different dwelling places (*manshōpe*).¹⁷⁹ In Chapel 3 a limestone lintel for a door that leads to Chapel 5 bears the exhortation: “Jesus Christ, bless the dwelling (*manshōpe*).”¹⁸⁰ As I have illustrated earlier, the use of *manshōpe* is almost exclusively used to describe monastic habitations. At Bawit, in particular, several individuals are identified as the “man of the dwelling place (*manshōpe*).”¹⁸¹ The expression of a “man of X” is frequently used to identify an individual’s hometown or city and thus the convention now reflects the fact that an individual is linked more directly to the physical space he resides in than his former town of residency.¹⁸²

Chapel 17 brings together the importance of visual, epigraphic, and architectural evidence to illustrate how a title bonds a person to the community. The room is known for its visually rich polychrome wall paintings showing warrior saints, such as Sisinnius, and a niche with Christ in Majesty above a register with the Virgin flanked by the Apostles.¹⁸³ In addition to these famous representations, the walls and niches of Chapel 17 are painted with several examples of monastic fathers with accompanying inscriptions. On the north wall, a register over the niche includes eight individuals. One man is dressed in monastic clothing and is identified as “My Brother Papohe, the man of the dwelling” (see Fig. 49).¹⁸⁴ He carries a key in his left hand, perhaps indicating his importance as the owner of the *manshōpe*. In Hall 21 a poorly preserved dipinto states that “this is the dwelling place of Apa Apollo” before the text becomes illegible.¹⁸⁵ A second petition in the hall clearly states that Moui and Apollo men of “this dwelling.”¹⁸⁶

Other painted inscriptions at the Monastery of Apa Apollo illustrate a use of a variety of architecture terms across the settlement, but they occur with less frequency. *Tōpos* (place), for example, occurs just over ten times.¹⁸⁷ How to read this term, as discussed earlier, is determined by context. Whether the meaning is “place” or “monastery” or something else is determined in a context that is not always present when reading dipinti. After *manshōpe* and *topos* the most often used term for describing the built environment at Bawit is “cell or room” (*ri*).¹⁸⁸ The choice to read *ri* as “cell” rather than “room” creates a monastic setting that is not as apparent or seemingly necessary when reading legal documents between other Late Antique individuals. Six of the eleven occurrences of *ri* appear in dipinti from Hall 6. This suggests that *ri* was perhaps particularly



49. Row of monks painted above a niche in Chapel 17 on its north wall at Bawit. The second monk from the left is holding keys and is identified as the “Father of the Manshōpe/Dwelling Place.”

descriptive of Hall 6 along with the use of *kēpe* (vault), *topos* (place or monastery), and *ēi* (house),¹⁸⁹ which was found in use only in Hall 6. Neither *manshōpe* nor *monasterion* appear in the more than 340 dipinti from Hall 6. In fact, *monasterion* is used only a few times to describe the built environment at Bawit and appears in a context to describe the entity of the settlement as the “Monastery of Apa Apollo” in which an individual asserts one’s identity in relationship to the monastery as an institution.¹⁹⁰ An inscription on the north wall of Hall 21 provides a list of Egyptian monastic saints in Coptic and then ends with a Greek petition from Isidore, who is a monk from the Monastery of Apa Apollo.¹⁹¹ In this case, the author evokes the entire settlement, but not the built physical space or structure, as we find with the other dipinti.

These examples of epigraphic evidence provide a window into how those who painted inscriptions, either themselves or on behalf of others, regarded the spaces in which they moved. Such terms also show the same flexibility in nomenclature that we see emerging from the documentary evidence; although in the case of letters and legal matters, we often see individuals representing the institution of the monastery as an entity rather than a person of a single space.

Looking at the Built Environment

After considering the ways in which monks and visitors regarded the spaces at the Monastery of Apa Apollo, it is important to look at a few examples of the rooms to see what was physically built at the site. The majority of the non-ecclesiastical buildings excavated at the Monastery of Apa Apollo were either long rectangular halls, measuring roughly $10\text{--}12 \times 4\text{--}5$ meters, or square rooms, roughly measuring 5×5 meters.¹⁹² Most rooms had windows on the south side of the structures with long sloping sills to allow more indirect light into the room. The location of the windows demonstrates also how builders took advantage of the southern winds to provide ventilation to the rooms. Specific ventilation shafts, if they did exist, would have been found at the upper levels of the rooms that have not survived. Some rooms were covered with a flat terrace roof made of wood beams and then covered with reeds, encased in plaster. An exterior staircase, similar to those seen at Karanis and Jeme, provided access to a second story or terrace.¹⁹³ Domes and barrel vaults were used in all other instances. Domes, built on either pendentives or squinches, covered spaces with a square floor plan.¹⁹⁴ In the more common case of rectangular floor plans, builders used barrel vaults to roof longer spaces where the width did not exceed 5 meters. In all cases, mud bricks formed a roof that was covered with plaster. Construction of rooms followed a fairly regular plan of erecting rectilinear walls and then a second wall, abutting the initial room's mud brick framing, was built against it. The brick coursing of the interior wall would then be altered to cover the curvature for the barrel vault.¹⁹⁵

Aside from the recording of dipinti on the walls of many of the rooms, the prominent focus for the early publications was the elaborate painted programs, illustrating the high skill of painters during the sixth to ninth centuries. Rooms included programs outlining the life of King David, the importance of equestrian saints, and in one case the "Holy Church," personified as a Byzantine empress.¹⁹⁶ Monastic fathers, almost exclusively Egyptian in character, graced the walls of many rooms, illustrating the importance of Coptic monastic heritage for the community. Additionally, some rooms contained fewer Christian and monastic scenes.¹⁹⁷ The publications offered a catalog of the cleared rooms that often includes an accounting of numerous dipinti, inscriptions, and a summary of the painted programs found along the walls. However, despite the wealth of visual evidence, Clédat found little remarkable or of interest in the chapels he excavated.¹⁹⁸ Akin to other excavation monographs for the early twentieth century, we truly see into the world of a single excavator and his personal views of what was valued at the time of publication. Numerous times Clédat directly states the architecture holds little interest and proceeds to present a record of the wall paintings and the inscriptions and dipinti, with only rare attention to the material found within the room during excavation. He

included over 50 plan drawings of the buildings, but often without a scale or orientation, making the plans more akin to sketches than accurate drawings.¹⁹⁹

Chapel 28 is an example of a room that was pulled out of its architectural context because it contained a rich and colorful painted program. The room was described initially as an example of the funerary chapels seen elsewhere at Bawit; however, subsequent excavation reveals that it is one room connected to Chapels 19 and 39 on the east and to possibly two or three additional buildings on the north and east sides.²⁰⁰ The hall is a “double hall” as it measures 10.7×4.6 meters wide.²⁰¹ It is unusual in that its orientation is east–west rather than north–south. The room originally had four entrances, one on each wall. A doorway on the east wall grants passage to Chapel 39. One could also leave the room by a door on the north to an unexcavated room. In an earlier phase of the room, one could also access the room on the south and west by doorways that were later blocked and plastered over. Two pilasters bisect the room, indicating the place where a wall would have been if the room had been originally a square room before remodeling. Three of the four walls were well preserved, with the north wall being in a comparatively poorer state of preservation. The fill within the room included carved wood inserts, possibly for a window; a worked stone with denticulation; several large ceramic storage jars; and numerous body sherds with a few bearing the names of John and Apollo.²⁰² Clédât did not recover any funerary stelae or commemorative dipinti from within Chapel 28 that might substantiate the funerary nature of the space.

The walls of Chapel 28 contain four preserved niches and a multiregister, painted program. The lower parts of the wall were decorated with a multicolored rope band within a frame. Above this band, artists painted a frieze of florets and leaves. The third register included three painted niches (on the east, south, and west walls), along with panels of saints and monks flanking the niches. The east niche includes an image of an enthroned Mother of God, holding the Christ child in a mandorla.²⁰³ Two angels, named the Angel of God and the Angel of Lord, flank the Virgin and hold censers that would distribute incense in front of the Virgin’s throne.²⁰⁴ The south and west niches hold single portraits of two of the three Hebrews from Daniel 3, Azarias (west) and Misael (south).²⁰⁵ A third niche on the north wall seems a likely reconstruction to contain the third Hebrew, Hananiah.²⁰⁶ Framing the painted niches, the walls of the room were finished with a white plaster and painted with images of saints and monastic brothers. Above this row of painting on the west is a fourth register of painting, but only partially preserved.

The individuals represented along the north wall, as an example, include the names of Old Testament prophets and Egyptian monastic fathers, such as Apollo, Jeremiah, Paul, Antony, and Isaac.²⁰⁷ Other brothers and saints are represented holding books of the Gospels along the east wall.



50. Three monastic saints from Chapel 28 at Bawit. Lazaros, the central monk, holds a censer and the monk on the right holds keys.

Here the individuals include Victor, Kosmos, and Damien.²⁰⁸ The monks represented along the south wall in the east end of the hall have specific titles. For example, we see a Brother Lazaros, who is the bearer of oil, and Father Anoup, the treasurer (see Fig. 50).²⁰⁹ In contrast, the west half of the hall contains representations of individuals with nonliturgical duties. The monks, shown on the west wall, bear titles that reflect their occupations, presumably within the monastery and possibly before entering the monastery. The diverse list includes two carpenters, a fuller, a tanner, and eight scribes.²¹⁰

If we consider the minimal graffiti and dipinti in Chapel 28, we will have very little to help elucidate the meaning of the room apart from what can be gleaned from the paintings and the room's layout. In considering the function of Chapel 28, there is no evidence for interpreting the space as a mortuary space for the commemoration of the dead. A more complete analysis would require a close examination of the finds from within the room, but without this material, it is difficult to come to a convincing interpretation. However, what Chapel 28 does present is a visual representation of monks who at one time inhabited the monastery and performed various duties. The presence of eight scribes supports the importance of literacy within the monastic community.

Overall, Chapel 28 represents the rich visual programs that existed at several of the rooms at Bawit. How did these rooms relate to adjoining rooms? They certainly did not stand alone as single rooms or single two-story dwellings, as they appear in the publications, but were part of larger buildings, whose structure is not apparent in the publications. The description of Chapel 39 is brief. We learn it was similar to Chapel 28 in that it was also painted, but the material was too fragmentary for recording aside from the observation of fragments of birds, ships, and figural fragments. However, what was of interest in Chapel 39 were the nineteen inscriptions with names of individuals, petitions for remembrance, and a "graffito painting" of a large boat with an associated text: "Apa Kuriakos Father of the Topos/Place."²¹¹ Of the nineteen inscriptions, four individuals appear multiple times. Makare from Tmoyne appears seven times, first in a large painted dipinto that was probably original to the room, and the remaining references appear throughout the room. Three other monks appear three times in the dipinti: Pamoun, George, and Mena – perhaps they once lived together in this space along with Kuriakos the Father of the Topos. The dipinti, painted niches, and representations of monastic inhabitants enable us to begin imagining who lived at the community, but we are still missing evidence for how the inhabitants may have interacted within the space through their use of the structures and the activities performed in the various buildings.

Whereas Chapel 28 introduces us to the monastic visual world, Chapel 19 illustrates how dipinti enhances our ability to interpret the function and purpose of the spaces at Bawit. Like most buildings at Bawit, Chapel 19 was identified as a funerary chapel, but little physical evidence substantiates that



51. Chamfered windowsills along the south wall of Chapel 19 at Bawit.

claim.²¹² The building is a long hall (23×5 meters), twice the length of Chapel 28, and was likely covered by a barrel vault, as no pilasters are present to carry the weight of two domed roofs. The walls were preserved to a height of 4.5 meters; this would make it unlikely that the room had a second story. The long hall is oriented north–south with three windows to the south providing indirect light to the room with the assistance of chamfered window sills (see Fig. 51). The east wall, on the south end, has a large painted niche. On the opposite wall, four niches pierce the west wall. A few ostraca, recovered from within the room, included the names of Peter and Isaac.²¹³ The wall paintings in Chapel 19 are mostly entirely geometric with alternating patterns of interlacing cords, floral patterns, and colorful bands. The name of Emanuel, next to a cross, appears over the only entrance, which bisects the east wall. On the west wall, two peacocks flank a second painted cross with accompanying inscriptions in two elongated rectangles on either side of the birds (see Fig. 52). The inscription to the left of the cross makes reference to Old Testament figures such as Samuel, David, Solomon, and Ezekiel. The inscription to right lists monastic fathers and includes the following individuals: John “Father of the Cell,” Apollo, and Abraham the Lesser.²¹⁴ Therefore, on this wall we see the recognition of one who is the “Father of the *ri*,” a title found elsewhere within



52. Paintings with peacocks flanking a cross on the west wall of Chapel 19 at Bawit. The Coptic inscription on the right of the far peacock includes the expression “John, Father of the Cell.”

the settlement. Of the eighty-five inscriptions found in Chapel 19, twice as many inscriptions were placed on the west wall than on the east wall. The west wall with the entrance and niche to the south end had fifty-six inscriptions. Six include direct requests for prayer on behalf of the author to the one who reads the prayer.²¹⁵ The twenty-eight inscriptions on the east wall include eight petitions for prayer. These direct requests accompany several examples of named saints intimately associated with Egyptian monasticism such as Apollo, Phib, and Anoup.

Compared with Chapel 28, Chapel 19 was a room used by several individuals who hoped that others entering the space could read their requests and pray for them at some point. The fact that the intercessory requests are clustered around the walls means that a monk could enter the room and likely read the invocations on the walls before proceeding to the niche for a paraliturgical event or return to another space to participate in prayer. The physical length of the hall – almost three times the size of the average rectangular rooms at Bawit – suggests that the hall was used for some type of communal gatherings that warranted such a large space. The density of the dipinti points to a space in which others might be inspired to pray for each other. The curious fact that

two-thirds of the prayers were on the west wall and not on the east wall, which is considered the main direction of prayer, suggests we may be observing how visitors to the space inscribed petitions on the west walls as they entered or exited the room.²¹⁶ The use of the east niche for prayer is apparent when contrasted with the other rooms at Bawit that contained minimal evidence for physical interaction with the images in the space. It could be possible that a high volume of graffiti in one room versus another may reflect the function of the hall. Its large size is similar to that of Hall 6, which was also not a private dwelling, but apparently a space in which monks and laity visited.

In contrast to Chapels 19 and 28 as examples of the highly decorated rooms at the Monastery of Apa Apollo, it is important to look at two examples of spaces that were clearly domestic in nature and were fortunately documented by Maspero in his 1913 season. Halls 14 and a group of rooms in the south of the mound, Halls 40–46, are examples of domestic spaces. The rooms are made of mud brick, have white plaster walls and floors, and have built-in cooking and storage facilities. Hall 14 is a kitchen linked to a collection of rooms (Halls 1–17) in the northwest corner of the settlement. It was accessed from the courtyard (Hall 2), directly west of a central installation that may have held a water jug in the open space.²¹⁷ The kitchen likely provided access for food preparation for those who were praying, working, and staying in the rooms of this building.²¹⁸ The room's measurements were not provided, but it had a flat roof with central beams still visible and smaller transverse beams covered with some plaster, this suggests the room was not wider than 5 meters. The room had an oven, or possibly a stove, in the northeast end of the hall in an alcove.²¹⁹ The room was closed by a single pivot door, which swung open into the room. The presence of the kitchen as part of the complex of Halls 1–17 helps us better view the building as complex of rooms involving elaborately decorated halls, rooms without paintings, stoops, and spaces with expressive petitions for prayer and blessings.

The second domestic space is Hall 40 and was part of collection of a series of at least six rooms around an open courtyard. From Maspero's brief note on the excavation of this area we learn that the location of the rooms is somewhere on the south end of the settlement. Hall 41 is in the southeast, accessed by a west door from Hall 42. A second door opened to the east, but this area was not excavated. Halls 41 and 42 provide a unique opportunity to consider the relationship between a typical room with paintings and an undecorated space. Hall 42 is a square room, which suggests it was covered by a dome rather than a barrel vault. The walls of the room have figural paintings, including the Archangel Gabriel, three smaller figures, and possibly the Virgin holding Christ. Maspero suggests that the room may have been used later for storage of grain and for the tethering of animals, and that the final floor level was a later phase of the structure.²²⁰ Ten of the fourteen dipinti recorded from within Hall

42 reference women of the community; all of the texts are undated.²²¹ Ama Theodote is listed as the Mother of the Monastery (although the word for monastery is incomplete, it may be restored as *heneete*) and a woman named Marihēu occurs four times.²²²

The materials recovered from Halls 41 and 42 are interesting when read together. The finds from within Hall 42 included a variety of ceramic containers and items that would be used in food preparation: an amphora with salted fish, a deep platter filled with fish, and an amphora with salt.²²³ Along with materials for salting fish, Maspero also found fragments of two books still resting within a cupboard.²²⁴ For Hall 41, Maspero included a photograph of the room showing that the floor of the room included three massive, hand-built bins; two elongated basins sunk into the floor; and a variety of cupboards.²²⁵ The square room (5 × 4.88–5.19 meters) included fragments of baskets, wooden furniture, and a pillar. The north wall had a unique window with a vertical grill made of wood. The window has two bays with carved plaster bases. A built-in stoop was built against all four walls to provide convenient seating for those working within the space. No signs of carbon, stoves, or ovens were found within and thus this room is not a kitchen, but may be a space for preparing food, such as salted fish, or for working with grains.

Hall 40, located across the courtyard from Halls 41 and 42, is equipped with a series of niches and built-in shelving with two large, chamfered windows granting indirect light into the room on the south side (see Fig. 53). The photograph alone suggests a room that was functional until one turns to look at the north wall that is painted with a figural program of monastic saints flanking Archangel Uriel, one of the seven archangels who appear frequently in Coptic texts.²²⁶ The fourth figure to the right of Uriel is identified as “Ama Rachel, the Mother of the *heneete*.” Her presence in figural form, along with other inscriptions, has led to an interpretation that Bawit was home to a monastic community for women in addition to the one for men. The visual representation of Ama Rachel is unusual along with the other male monks, but she is not the only “Mother (*maay*)” of a community: Ama Macrina, Ama Theodote, and one other female monastic, whose name is not preserved, also are listed in dipinti from these rooms. It is possible that this section of the settlement was indeed a space dedicated to female monastics, but more excavation in this area would be necessary in order to examine the content of the rooms to ascertain if women were actually in residence.

All the rooms discussed above illustrate that there is much to be learned from the material excavated more than a century ago. The buildings illustrate the craftsmanship evident at the Monastery of Apa Apollo and the importance of the painted rooms for the visual culture of the monastic community. A more detailed study of the buildings at Bawit is needed to further analyze the spatial relationships of the rooms to each other. For our purposes here, it is



53. South wall of Hall 40 excavated by Jean Maspero at Bawit. The wall is pierced by several niches and cupboards, which have grooves for some type of wooden framing. The room may be part of the women's community at Bawit.

important to consider the representative elements of the settlement to provide a foundation for how to identify a monastic settlement and differentiate it from a Christian town or a pilgrimage center. As the first, large-scale excavation of a monastery in Egypt, the Monastery of Apa Apollo provided the first pillar of the study of monastic archaeology. With this overview of the range of materials preserved at Bawit, we can now turn to a sample of other monastic built environments to determine what characteristics they share and how they reflect regional preferences informed by the natural resources available for construction and design.

CONCLUSION

The houses at Alexandria, Karanis, Jeme, and Tebtunis demonstrate a great consistency in how they were made. The materials that skilled bricklayers and contractors used came easily from local resources. Walls, formed from mud bricks, were held together with mortars of different consistencies and hues, reflecting the inherited knowledge of how to design stable architecture with

flat and domed roofs. In considering whether monastic structures are significantly different materially and architecturally from nonmonastic spaces, the answer must be no.

The spatial configuration within a monastic settlement and the buildings within are remarkably similar, as we see at Bawit. But the ways in which monastics and their guests interacted with the space is a key indicator that monastic spaces were substantially different. When we have inscriptional evidence from within the buildings, there is greater certainty that we can classify a space as occupied by Christians, for example, rather than by Muslims. However, the presence of expressly Christian *dipinti* should not automatically require that a space be monastic. Very little discussion exists of what the residence of a Christian quarryman working in the escarpment would look like. In considering the characteristics of the archaeology of monasticism, it is necessary to broaden our view of the materials and the landscape, and examine further how these two vital components were viewed from within the monastic community.

The lack of a theatre, a bathhouse, or workshops is not enough of a sign that these communities were not towns. However, when comparing Bawit to other Late Antique settlements, we can better observe what features make a monastic settlement monastic. It is not the regularity of the shape of rooms, the presence of an enclosure wall, or the painting of an image of Christ on the wall. All of these features may also appear in a nonmonastic context. Rather, it is the intersection of unique features that foster monastic living (a niche for praying facing east, stoops for long-term sitting, rooms to paint prayers on, and workshops for weaving baskets, weaving textiles, or working leather) with images and text that help secure a monastic reading of the built environment.

SEVEN

LOOKING AT EGYPT'S MONASTIC BUILT ENVIRONMENTS

PHIB REACHED FOR THE LENTILS SOAKING IN THE WATER NEARBY. HE placed the ceramic bowl gently on the mud daub stove. The coals beneath burned brightly and cooked the lentils for the stew he would serve later in the evening. The kitchen was cooler than on most days, as a light fog covered the desert, shielding the sand below from the morning sun's rays. He was grateful for the chimney at the back of the kitchen, which helped direct smoke and heat out of the small room. He would be expected to supervise the cooking of the soup and prepare dough for baking in the evening. He had little chance of sitting in the courtyard or for participating in prayer in the larger rooms on the opposite end of the house. Fortunately he was seeking to memorize John 2 and scratched a short mnemonic aid into the soft plaster wall in the kitchen to help him stay focused while he tended the small fires.

Apa Victor, Phib's spiritual father, had told him that when he first learned he would move into the kitchen, he had asked the builders to include a chimney to allow smoke to move out of the room. He was worried that, because the whole house would be cut from the shale cliffs, the smoke would become stifling for whomever was given the task to cook. The builders, not familiar with the need to have a kitchen inside a room rather than in the open courtyard in the villages, were confused by Victor's request. They were used to carving spaces out of naturally existing caves and wadis, but rarely had they added kitchens in those caves. Victor explained how a separate area would be needed for the bread oven, away from the stoves, so that a cook could still

work within the room without being overwhelmed by the heat. Certainly in the cool evenings and winter months, the kitchen would be a coveted space. But the summer months would make the space unbearable unless one cooked in the evenings.

Phib was one of many monks who chose to live in a smaller community; his was located 15 kilometers west of the main urban center of Esna, in southern Egypt. His choice was similar to that of many other men who elected to practice their asceticism in more intimate monastic residences or communities. While certainly monks did choose to live in large-scale purpose-built communities such as at the Monastery of Apa Jeremias and the Monastery of Apa Apollo, many more were attracted to settlements that were seemingly smaller in scale. The residences contained fewer than twenty-five rooms and more commonly had rooms to accommodate only a few monks. The houses were self-sufficient units, equipped with kitchens, storage areas, communal areas, and private quarters. They were not grouped together or aligned according to streets and alleys. Most of the settlements were identified as a *topos* of a particular father, such as Apa Thomas or Apa Phoibammon. Some were carved into existing wadis, caves, and the desert basins. Other builders used standing stone architecture or long-abandoned pharaonic tombs to adapt for a new purpose. Mud bricks could be made in a day and offer a wide array of opportunities for modifying a space to suit the needs of a resident. Just as today, the sun-dried Nile silt mud bricks could transform a space into a home in just a few days.¹

Further north in Middle Egypt, a brother wrote to a fellow monk who was traveling away from his community. As the brother read the papyrus at Dayr al-Balā'yzah, he could sense the concern and encouragement of his friend's words: "For it would be a small matter that you would be far from your *dwelling place* and afterwards suffer loss ... but God has pity for you."² The brother knew his friend only wished him the best as he traveled back to his residence at the monastery. He knew that for some monks one's dwelling place was truly a home on earth.

This chapter continues the discussion from Chapter 6 by further illustrating and documenting how Egypt's desertscapes became inhabited landscapes. The Monastery of Apa Apollo represents a very specific landscape. It highlights the greatness of a large monastic settlement with iconic images of Byzantine Egyptian monasticism. In what follows, the sites I have selected range from the monumental to the forgotten – some have beautiful objects that made them the desire of collectors, and other have been visited by few scholars. In my discussion of sites I do not privilege one type of site over another as an effort to combat the long-held model of dismissing a site if there is nothing worth removing.³ All the settlements had value for their Late Antique inhabitants regardless of the settlement's size, longevity, or relative wealth. As interpreters of the past, we create patterns that foster a "solidarity of meaning,"

or a singularity of meaning, in which we highlight the shared cultural values of past communities – in this case, my aim is to distill the values of monastic living that led to site formation and design in Egypt. In asking the question of how monastic sites came to be, we may reveal social and cultural behaviors that are not expressed overtly in written accounts. It is tempting to look at the larger settlements alone as indicative of monastic site design, as they offer the “monolithic architectural determinism of place” and reflect, as is the case with the Monastery of Apa Apollo, the monastic “hegemonic built environments.”⁴ But, equally informative, and certainly more ubiquitous, are the much smaller and more modest monastic settlements. They offer a window into how many monastics built housing to create their communities with the available materials. In order to examine the range of monastic settlements, I survey seven sites excavated between 1906 and the 1990s in chronological order to demonstrate the ways in which new discoveries have changed our perception of monastic settlements.

THE MONASTERY OF APA JEREMIAS IN THE MOUNTAIN OF MEMPHIS

The Monastery of Apa Jeremias (Ar. Dayr Apa Jeremiah) is nestled between the well-known pharaonic monuments of Djoser’s Old Kingdom Step Pyramid and many later Middle and New Kingdom tombs at Saqqara. Located on the west bank of the Nile and roughly at the base of the Delta, the monastery is an excellent example of a purpose-built settlement in close proximity to an ancient site with substantial, visible monumental architecture. The excavated site covers a densely built area of 4 hectares, significantly smaller in area than that of the Monastery of Apa Apollo. However, the monastery was built in a small area of a much larger multiperiod necropolis that extends north–south for 300 hectares. Despite its smaller size, the remarkable painted programs found within the monastic residences captured the attention of numerous scholars and changed perceptions of Coptic art (see Fig. 54).

The site plan for the community shows the church and its surrounding buildings as being part of a well-designed settlement with the main church at the center of the monastic community. Quibell’s original plan for the community does not represent phases of the settlement, but rather locations for all the buildings he excavated.⁵ Peter Grossmann reexamined the standing structures and later the churches at the Monastery of Apa Jeremias. He refined the essential elements of Quibell’s conclusions for dating the site and produced a composite plan after measuring the still standing, excavated structures (see Fig. 55).⁶ For example, Grossmann shifted the founding of the settlement from the fifth to the sixth century, attributed a significant remodeling of the church to the seventh century, demonstrated that one of the churches is in fact not a church, and argued for extensive expansion at the site after the Arab conquest.



54. Three of the Virtues from Cell 709 from the Monastery of Apa Jeremias at Saqqara. The Virtues may be holding the holy bread (*eulogia* or *qurban*) that was baked nearby the church. Photo by Gertrude Bell, 1909, J_032. Photo courtesy of the Gertrude Bell Archives, Newcastle University.

Hans Severin, working with Grossmann, cataloged and classified the sculpture from the central church and offered additional support for the new date for the church and the settlement's history.⁷ Grossmann and Severin concluded the church was founded in the middle of the sixth century and the community flourished, as testified by the numerous dated inscriptions throughout the site, until the middle of the eighth century. In contrast to Quibell, who regarded the seventh century as the beginning of the community's decline, Grossmann regards the majority of the building at the Monastery of Apa Jeremias as the product of a "rich building activity" of the late seventh and eighth centuries.⁸ Grossmann is more reserved in his description of the end of the monastery and links the abandonment to larger political tensions in the ninth century, stating: "Evidently the repercussions of the revolts of the Copts against Arab supremacy in the eighth and ninth centuries did not pass the monastery by without leaving traces."⁹ The settlement was never reoccupied after the ninth century.



55. Plan of the Monastery of Apa Jeremias showing all the excavated buildings at the site. The Nile is to the east of the settlement.

Even with Grossmann's efforts in the 1970s to refine Quibell's work, our understanding of Egyptian monastic settlement design is strongly dependent, perhaps unconsciously and erroneously, on Quibell's reconstruction. The settlement map for the Monastery of Apa Apollo at Bawit was incomplete for much of the twentieth century, and therefore the Monastery of Apa Jeremias provided a vivid picture of a densely built monastic community. There was only one comprehensive site plan map produced by Quibell, and that map had several limitations. Ewa Wipszycka rightly notes that Quibell's plan is overly simplified and highly flawed.¹⁰ All excavated buildings are shown on the plan without any differentiation between various phases of construction, despite the fact that Quibell often discusses "late" and "early" phases when describing specific rooms. Buttresses, blocked doorways, cuts into walls, or subdivisions are not indicated on the map, though they did appear on a handful of detailed



56. View west toward the steps for the Main Church at the Monastery of Apa Jeremias at Saqqara. The pathway shows the combination of stone and mud brick for construction and repairs. Photo by Gertrude Bell, 1909, J_017. Photo courtesy of the Gertrude Bell Archives, Newcastle University.

plans for more substantial buildings such as the refectory, and even in some of the photographs it is possible to observe later work to repair or modify rooms (see Fig. 56). Therefore, we must use caution in reading Quibell's plan as an accurate representation of the settlement's full extent; it does represent all the buildings Quibell cleared and it cannot convey the relative relationship of structures during the 300-year history of the community.¹¹

During the first season of work, Quibell excavated about ten rooms. The first season provides ample evidence that the settlement was in fact a monastic community and not a late Roman or Byzantine village. Key elements within the structures reflect the monastic needs of the community. Several rooms had a central east niche or "apsidal niche." Many were painted with registers showing the Virgin with Child and panels with the Archangels Gabriel and Michael along with Biblical and monastic saints, such as Apa Jeremias and the equestrian saints George and Theodore. The walls of the remaining rooms were equipped with built-in cupboards and small niches with carbon residue



57. East end of Chapel D excavated at the Monastery of Apa Jeremias with an east niche with Apa Jeremias (on the left), the Virgin (in the center), and Apa Enoch (on the right). Built-in shelving flanks the right side of the niche along with a small lamp niche underneath the central niche.

from oil lamps (see Fig. 57). Small benches offered seating within a few rooms, and windows on the south walls, with chamfered sills, offered ample light to the rooms. Quibell also found the remains of bolt holes for latching doors and several water stands, made of limestone. Inscribed limestone pavers lined the floors of the rooms, and Quibell removed a few to explore under the floor for burials, but found the pavers rested on sand. Only one building showed possible signs of being two stories high, although no evidence existed for stairs, so access may have depended on a ladder. Small finds from the rooms included limestone capitals and pilasters, two seventh-century coins, amphora, blown glass, glazed bowls, and plaster framing for a window.¹² In subsequent seasons it would become clearer that the rooms were part of larger buildings and the “cells” were not stand-alone rooms but rather part of a block of rooms in a larger structure (see Fig. 58). The cells were not all painted, but they did have a wide range of decorative treatments that might reflect the individual tastes of



58. Excavated monastic residences at the Monastery of Apa Jeremias. The near room shows an east, central niche flanked by chamfered windows with Coptic dipinti around the room.

the residents and not a community-wide requirement for how rooms should be painted or designed.

The construction methods at the Monastery of Apa Jeremias were poor, in Quibell's opinion. The rooms were made primarily of mud bricks and walls were covered with a chaffy mud preparation layer before being covered with a finer plaster finish. Floors were built on a preparation layer of bricks and plaster laid directly on soft sand or with a deposit of organic matting, before a finishing layer of limestone paving (sometimes with reused pharaonic blocks or later Roman burial plaques) (see Fig. 39).¹³ The buildings were the "rudest" he had seen and the paintings were "debased."¹⁴ After several weeks of working with the mud brick architecture he writes:

The most striking feature of these buildings as a whole is their irregularity, due both to the original plan and to the constant alteration to which it was evidently submitted. Walls are not straight nor vertical; the angles are not right angles; the walls were often built too thin and soon leaned over at alarming slopes; when this happened they were not taken down and rebuilt, but a buttress was added to prevent any further bending.



59. Apa Jeremias's pulpit or "ambon," now in the Coptic Museum in Cairo. Photo by Gertrude Bell, 1909, J_019. Photo courtesy of the Gertrude Bell Archives, Newcastle University.

These buttresses, projecting masses of brickwork of various shapes, form a characteristic feature of the site.¹⁵

The photograph of the pulpit of Jeremias, found in Room 1772.S, and now in the Coptic Museum, abuts a mud brick wall that reflects Quibell's description (see Figs. 12 and 59). In explaining the last phase of occupation, Quibell suggests that the community deliberately made the monastery a "maze" by blocking passages and doors to help trap a potential attacker or thief.¹⁶ Despite his low assessment of the construction, many of the rooms show the skills of masons and someone attuned to create good ventilation and provide indirect light to the various rooms.

In most rooms, at least one stone was inscribed with a commemoration of a deceased monk or a lay man or woman. Other inscriptions invoked the Trinity, the Apostles, and famous biblical and monastic saints. Interestingly, this community highly favored three specific individuals: Apa Jeremias, the possible founder of the community; his companion Apa Enoch; and Ama Sibylla.¹⁷

Christians, some lay and some monastic, offered petitions by painting directly on the walls of cells and also in commissioning inscribed limestone pavers to be used as flooring in several rooms and halls. Popular male monastic names were placed on the walls with the title of *apa*, including Macarius, Apollo, Phib, Anoub, Moses, Enoch, John, and Jeremias.¹⁸ A study of the inscriptional information from the Monastery of Apa Jeremias indicated that women were present in some form as possible monastics and that commemorations were regularly offered to honor lay women. However, exactly where the female monastics lived – if they did have a residential space at Saqqara – how they related to the male monastics, and what their role was in the community cannot be deduced from the current archaeological evidence.¹⁹

The appearance of Ama Sibylla is very interesting, as she appears in more than eighty inscriptions at Saqqara. Birger Pearson explains that Egyptian Christians uniquely linked Sibylla to Enoch. At Saqqara, Pearson sees a “triad of special saints” (Jeremias, Enoch, and Sibylla), reflecting “the tradition in Coptic Christianity that Sibyl is the sister of Enoch.”²⁰ The formulae also included a statement addressing the reader – or, in this case, the person walking in and out of the room – to remember the author of the dipinto or graffito as they read the words invoking Jeremias, Enoch, and Ama Sibylla.²¹ Tim Vivian’s analysis of the invocations to Ama Sibylla illustrate the community was aware of extracanonical traditions, although no fragments have been found at Saqqara of these texts.²² Vivian traces the evolution of Sibylla from the Greek Sibyl, stating: “Because of Sibylla’s close literary (at Akhmim) and inscriptional (at Saqqara) association with Enoch and her painted association with the Virtues (at Bawit), and because of her probable identification as a prophet, there seems no doubt now that Ama Sibylla was indeed the Sibyl of Greek legend. Coptic piety and Christian imagination transformed her into a Christian saint.”²³ Although Quibell regarded Sibylla as a possible founder of a women’s community at Saqqara, “she was (in modern terms) a mythological being,” and most see her and her brother Enoch as spiritual patrons to the monastery.²⁴ While Jeremias and Sibylla’s historicity may be difficult to establish, they share a similar history of mythologizing that emerges in the narrative history of monastic foundations seen with the lives of Macarius, Pachomius, and Apollo.²⁵ The repeated use of these names helped solidify the community’s identity, just as the use of Apollo, Anoub, and Phib did for the residents at the Monastery of Apa Apollo at Bawit.²⁶

The sources for determining the name of the community and spaces within the community are sparse. Although more than 400 texts were recorded, the documentary evidence from the site is far outnumbered by the high percentage of inscribed floor slabs and painted diptini. Therefore, we have fewer letters, wills, or accounts to turn to for examining how monastic residents presented their community to each other and those outside the



60. Gertrude Bell's January 1909 photograph of the Main Church looking east across the cultivated fields. Compare her photograph with Quibell's photograph during the inundation, Fig. 9. Photo by Gertrude Bell, 1909, J_006. Photo courtesy of the Gertrude Bell Archives, Newcastle University.

monastery. *Monastērion* occurs only twice – once in a dipinto by a monk visiting the monastery and once in an inscribed limestone block.²⁷ The inscribed limestone block is the most descriptive identification of the settlement and bears the date of 818 CE. The invocation asks for prayers for Apa Apollo, the Archimandrite and the *proestos* of the “monastery (*monastērion*) of Apa Jeremias in the mountain (*toou*) of Memphis.”²⁸ The appellation grounds the settlement as a part of the religious topography of Memphis (*Mebe*) and uses the mountain as a reference that reflects the significant rise of the settlement on the embankment by the Nile. In Gertrude Bell's 1909 photograph of the church, looking east across the cultivated fields, one might see why the community was regarded as “in the mountain” as the landscape rises sharpening from the cultivated fields below, which were flooded annual with the inundation (see Fig. 60). In comparing Bell's photograph with Quibell's, which was taken during the inundation, we can observe the fluctuating nature of the landscape that made access to the monastery by boat even easier (see Fig. 9).

With only forty-three ostraca collected from the site we are limited in seeing the monastery in terms of how it presented itself to others in correspondence. We are left then with the epigraphic evidence, which makes up 90 percent of the textual corpus. With regard to monastic terms for the built environment, there are references to positions of authority for the “Father of the Dwelling Place,”²⁹ the “Father of the Eating Place” (the refectory),³⁰ the “Father of the Sickness Place” (the infirmary),³¹ and “Father of the Fulling/Washing Place.”³² The titles show the positions of various monastics within the community and the physical settlement. An unusual occurrence for monastic settlements is the use of *ēi* (house) in three inscriptions and one dipinto, a term used almost exclusively for nonmonastic houses.³³ At Saqqara we may be observing a regional difference in employing the lay term for a residence than the more commonly used “dwelling place.” A dipinto from Room 764, for example, includes a prayer by Victor for a good death “in the house (*ēi*) of Apa,” a clear reference to the monastic community with the use of the title Father. In Room 1723, a red dipinto identifies Brother Mena as one who is “in the house (*ēi*) of holy Apa Jeremias.”³⁴ Whether this is a specific house *within* the monastery or is another appellation for the entire settlement is difficult to determine from the epigraphic corpus.

Blocks of houses appear on all four sides of the main church. Specialized installations for wine or oil production, flour milling, water tanks, and storage rooms were placed on the east side of the church, closest to the embankment (see Fig. 61). Their location would make travel and loading of goods easier across the flooded plain during the inundation. The large-scale clearing of the settlement does allow for us to assess the presence of all the cooking facilities for this site. It is clear that residences did not have private kitchens, thereby offering more physical evidence that that this community was a coenobitic form. Overall, the entire site had at least nine free-standing ovens; however, Quibell only drew seven in the rooms on his comprehensive map.³⁵ If Quibell excavated any stoves, he did not record them in his reports or recognize them as such. The ovens are spread across the site and may reflect area bakeries within the monastery. He asserted the ovens in Room 704 were used for baking the “eucharistic bread” and that a nearby trough was used for clearing “ashes after the fire had blazed out and before the loaves were put in.”³⁶ In addition to Room 704, there were six other rooms with at least one oven.³⁷ Placed between the refectory and the infirmary is a kitchen, Room 722. Two brick ovens, a built-in cauldron, and a mud bench were built against the west wall of the kitchen. The importance of food preparation for healthy and sick monks makes the placement of the kitchen between the infirmary and the refectory extremely practical. The epigraphic evidence from within the room is equally informative, as the graffiti identifies two monks, Phib and Theophilus, as fathers associated with the infirmary and the refectory.³⁸ Room 1756 held a



61. Mud brick storage rooms at the Monastery of Apa Jeremias at Saqqara showing similar building techniques with nonmonastic architecture.

Photo by Gertrude Bell, 1909, J_015. Photo courtesy of the Gertrude Bell Archives, Newcastle University.

large oven and a significant deposit of oyster shells thought to be from the Red Sea. Given the high density of the shell deposit, it is likely that some monks were eating oysters as part of their monastic diet. Three rooms to the west of the main church also contain ovens. This part of the site is a large residential quarter of the monastery and the ovens are located in three separate areas along a north–south street.³⁹ The distribution of the cooking facilities for bread, and possibly other food, offers convincing evidence that the built environment at Saqqara was a communal settlement in which bread was prepared in a variety of spaces and there might be a special bakery for the *eulogia* or *qurban*, the holy bread distributed at the church.

The importance of the Monastery of Apa Jeremias lies in its coenobitic design plan and in that the domestic or living quarters do not have independent kitchens, storage facilities, or private latrines. The site as a whole, however, did possess features that enhanced monastic living: eastern niches with painted programs, built-in seats or beds, sloping sills and air shafts for ventilation, and epigraphic evidence to reflect the diversity of the monastic community. Without any extant Pachomian monasteries to examine, the Monastery

of Apa Jeremias provides the most complete representation of a purpose-built coenobitic community excavated in the twentieth century. A boundary wall was observed in some clearing of the site, but not traced, and Quibell was not confident that it existed as an enclosure wall. The monks living here may have had a few markers to delineate their community, but the wall surely was not for defensive purposes, as it was not as dense and tall as those still visible today in Aswan, in Asyuit, and in Wadi al-Natrun.

The Monastery of Apa Jeremias does not represent, therefore, the cloistered monastery hidden behind a wall. The presence of numerous funerary stelae dedicated to lay women, men, and children, possibly offered both by monastic and nonmonastic individuals, further supports an interpretation of a monastic community engaged with the wider world. For example, the son of the bishop of Memphis even left an invocation for protection in one of the rooms.⁴⁰ These features, both physical and emotional, reflect the state of Egyptian monasticism in Memphis in the seventh and eighth centuries. The monks did not follow any particular allegiance to Antony, who appears only once in the inscriptions;⁴¹ neither does Pachomius appear, either as a named individual or as the revered saint.

The collected ostraca from rooms address the daily activities of the community and, in particular, its economic life. The collection is relatively small given the size of the site, but this is likely due to the clearing and excavation methods of the time rather than a reflection of limited economic activity. Several recorded transactions involved goods brought by ship and linked to a wharf under the jurisdiction of a particular individual. It is clear that the location of the monastery was well positioned near the Nile to participate in the river commerce of the Memphis community during the inundation. The ostraca may not prove ships and wharfs were owned by the monks at the Monastery of Apa Jeremias, but they do indicate that the monastery was engaged in a broader economy. Additional support for the activities includes records of camel loads of goods and the taxes levied against land shipments.

The Monastery of Apa Jeremias in the Mountain of Memphis is one example of how a community adapted an abandoned but visually significant historic landscape. While there are signs of reused pharaonic blocks and conversion of one tomb in particular for monastic use, the majority of the structures at Saqqara were built entirely to suit the needs of the community, being built from mud bricks and worked limestone. As monastic authors created a dangerous and active landscape in which monks were battling demons, the monks at Saqqara seemed not to take account of the larger religious battles embedded in literary sources. Instead, we read of concerns for daily deliveries, shipments of food, prayers for protection, and the need to invoke the regional protectors: Jeremias, Enoch, and Sibylla. The built environments contained the

necessary architectural features to enhance one's ability to see heaven through the numerous painted rooms at the settlement.

THE HOLY TOPOS OF EPIPHANIUS THE ANCHORITE

If Saqqara represents one of the best illustrations of a densely built monastic settlement, the ancient pharaonic mortuary landscape of Thebes offers a conglomerate of several independent monastic settlements, each with its own name, location, and identity. The natural topography of the Theban area is pierced by hundreds of rock-cut tombs, and thus the physical unifying feature of this landscape is how the many unoccupied tombs were converted into domestic sites of monastic habitation.⁴² The Theban hills were used at various times as temporary shelters, were visited by Greek and later Roman visitors, and were part of a large, monumental landscape, much like that of Saqqara. The built environments in Thebes were various and not necessarily uniform. They provide ample evidence for examining buildings, material culture, and the literary and epistolary production of small monastic communities. The work at the Holy Topos of Epiphanius the Anchorite was the first American-sponsored excavation of Coptic material by American Egyptologist Herbert E. Winlock, following the impressive discoveries by Clédat at Bawit and Quibell at Saqqara.⁴³

The Holy Topos of Epiphanius is a relatively small settlement located in the area of the west bank of Thebes known as Shaykh 'Abd al-Qurnah (see Fig. 10).⁴⁴ The core of the settlement, measuring only 0.5 hectare, extends out from the Middle Kingdom tomb of an Eleventh Dynasty vizier named Daga (TT103). The settlement proper was delimited by a boundary wall, and outside of this area, three other tomb "cells" may have been linked to the community, making the settlement area roughly 1.6 hectares (see Fig. 33). Winlock placed the foundation of the settlement in the seventh century, a time in which the community witnessed both the Persian Conquest and the later Arab Conquest.⁴⁵ The settlement was occupied, therefore, for about four generations by monastics before the settlement was abandoned entirely and never reoccupied.

The site is one of more than fifty, if not more, known monastic settlements grafted into the very fabric of the wadis of the Theban necropolis. Winlock recognized the importance of presenting the Holy Topos of Epiphanius within a broader context of monastic reuse of pharaonic tombs. While he referred to some Coptic settlements as "hovels," he believed it was necessary to situate the monastery in a broader context of extensive monastic remodeling of open tombs.⁴⁶ Analysis of the rich documentary evidence from Jeme and from other monastic settlements has fostered a multilayered analysis of monastic and lay interactions, family archives, and the education of monastic individuals.⁴⁷ Today the study of the region is rapidly expanding both in terms of new

archaeological projects and the publication of documentary evidence recovered from a variety of monastic communities within the area.

From Dra' Abu al-Naga in the north to beyond the Valley of the Queens in the south, numerous settlements were noticed, and over the course of the subsequent decades, excavation, and documentation of Christian remains have illustrated how actively monastic communities inhabited the underdeveloped and abandoned landscape of western Thebes.⁴⁸ Already by the end of the twentieth century, several sixth- and seventh-century Christian settlements were excavated, including the Holy Topos of Apa Phoibammon at Dayr al-Bahari in 1893, 1899, and the 1980s;⁴⁹ the Topos of Phoibammon, 10 kilometers south of the community at Dayr al-Bahari in 1948–1949;⁵⁰ the church of Saint Mark at Qurnat Mari in 1971–1975;⁵¹ an unnamed monastery at the site of Dayr al-Rumi in the 1970s;⁵² and the “Monastery of Cyriacus” at Theban Tomb 65 in the 2000s.⁵³

Recent interest in Coptic material remains and the recovery of documents from archaeological contexts has produced a wide array of new settlements and a wealth of material to illustrate that the Holy Topos of Epiphanius was just one of many settlements thriving during the sixth and seventh centuries in west Thebes.⁵⁴ Explorations in the Valley of the Queens, for example, illustrate that tombs here and in the wadis to the southwest were also used for monastic habitation.⁵⁵ Specific site work at individual tombs, such as TT152, in Shaykh 'Abd al-Qurnah, by the Polish Centre of Mediterranean Archaeology, is producing excellent documentation of how monastic builders adapted the interior of tombs by the addition of mud brick walls to partition space and to create doorways for protection and privacy.⁵⁶ The addition of painted guilloche bands around the door, cupboards, and white plaster all indicate signs of modification for habitation. The discovery of leather-bound Coptic codices and ostraca further solidifies the identification of the settlement as monastic.⁵⁷ The recovery of baskets and textile fragments, along with the related correspondence, suggests the monks at this community were active in the production of textiles and baskets for the local area. Excavations at TT29 have discovered the residence of Apa Frange, a monk known initially through his extensive correspondence found throughout many letters from the Theban area.⁵⁸ The ability to analyze the corpus of Frange's personal archive from his dwelling place, along with the wider monastic community of west Thebes, demonstrates how much more we can learn about how individuals functioned as advocates, legal consultants, and spiritual advisors.⁵⁹

The most recent addition to the rich corpus of Coptic settlements in Thebes is the Topos of Apa Paulos, a monastic settlement on the crest of Dra' Abu al-Naga known as Dayr al-Bakhit.⁶⁰ The site already shows unique monastic features not seen in Thebes such as a refectory with circular tables, workshops with built-in furniture, a residential hall with beds, and extensive documentary

evidence with more than 2,000 texts recovered thus far. The monks at the Topos of Apa Paulos lived at the settlement from the late sixth century until the beginning of the tenth century, and thus the settlement is contemporaneous with that of Apa Epiphanius, but had a longer period of occupation by at least two centuries.⁶¹ The archaeological remains, including architecture and substantial leather objects, illustrate that the monks at Apa Paulos were skilled artisans in the production of leather objects, such as shoes and book-binding, and in textiles.⁶² The excavations at Apa Paulos have exposed the largest monastic settlement in the Thebes, and its cemetery, which contains male, female, and adolescent burials, points to a community deeply engaged with activities in and outside the monastic settlement.⁶³ The Holy Topos of Epiphanius was therefore located at the heart of a diverse monastic landscape in Thebes.

Herbert Winlock began his published report by stating: “The settlement at the tomb of Daga was evidently one of hermits rather than a regularly organized monastery and hence the book throughout aims at describing the conditions of the hermit’s life, as distinct from that of the monk.”⁶⁴ He contrasts the lives of those who lived in large, enclosed monasteries with those who lived in the loosely confederated monastic settlements in the Theban hills. In Walter Crum’s discussion of the “Theban Hermits and Their Life,” he envisioned five classifications of monastic settlement. The first category consists of those who follow the Pachomian model and thereby are considered coenobitic communities, such as the medieval monastery of Anba Hadra in Aswan.⁶⁵ The second category includes clusters of ascetics who form an “informal group” around the dwelling of a holy man.⁶⁶ The third form involves only a senior monastic, who has a single disciple and together they live in some tomb or desert cave. The fourth category is a complete recluse, who confines himself to a cell without any human support. Somewhat reluctantly Crum admits that there may be a fifth category of ascetics: the “poor men” who traveled between communities seeking help and shelter but never associating themselves with any particular location or individual.⁶⁷ For Winlock and Crum, the settlement at Daga’s tomb was a perfect illustration of the second category: an informal community or a *laura*. Crum does admit that accepting the appellation *laura* to describe the settlement is supported by Coptic or Greek sources from Upper Egypt.⁶⁸ As discussed earlier, *laura* has a particularly regional application in Palestine and is not employed as often at Egyptian monastic communities. Additionally, the use of “hermit” evokes a specific mode of monastic living that is not necessarily appropriate for this community, despite Winlock and Crum’s view that the settlement was fundamentally different. What do the sources from the settlement reveal about how the community was described and identified during the sixth and seventh centuries?

To gain a sense of how the monks at Apa Epiphanius regarded their built environment, we can turn to the immensely rich documentary and legal



62. Coptic letter #198 on papyrus from the Holy Topos of Apa Epiphanius.

sources linked to this site (see Fig. 62).⁶⁹ In a will, monastic brothers Jacob and Elias present the terms for who may or may not inherit rights to the monastic property at Epiphanius.⁷⁰ In the will the site is called the “dwelling places” (*mma nshōpe*) as well as *topos*. Further clarification in the document explains how the physical site includes the caves (*bēb*) of Jacob, which he inherited legally from Apa Psan by way of his predecessor Apa Epiphanius, and the tower (*purgos*).⁷¹ Another important element of the will is the historical recognition that the dwelling places, including the caves and the tower, were built first by Apa Epiphanius and Apa Psan, along with assistance from Jacob.⁷² The testament is intended to provide for the sole benefactor, a devout monk named Stephen, to inherit the property. The will also includes a legal description of the perimeters of the settlement by referencing roads, valleys (*eia*), and hills (*bounas*) in the area, including a road that goes to the site of Holy Phoibammon (located at Dayr al-Bahri) to the cave (*bēb*) for remembering the holy men of Esna, Apa Abraham, and Apa Ammonius. At no place in the will, or the quotations to earlier testaments embedded within the text, is the settlement referred to as a monastery. Rather, the settlement is a collection of dwelling places, indicating that the monks differentiated their settlement from the Holy Topos of Apa Phoibammon in the “Holy Mountain (*oros*) of Memnonion.”⁷³ It is also important to note that the will refers to the settlements as caves and not as tombs.⁷⁴ This identification of the places as caves, which is a natural formation and where animals live, implies a belief that the tombs were sufficiently remodeled enough as to be regarded as their natural state as caves and no longer as the resting places of deceased pagans.⁷⁵

The occupants of this site preferred to identify themselves as living in dwelling places that were part of the larger community of the holy mountain (*toou*) of Jeme. The use of *manshōpe* appears in twenty-five texts excavated from the site. The term frequently refers to a monastic brother’s location.⁷⁶ For example, *P.Mon.Epiph* 370 directs someone to go to the “Dwelling Place of Apa Stephen” in order to retrieve the author’s shoe, which he forgot the day before.⁷⁷ Other texts reference the *topos* of a monk or a saint. As we have seen earlier, *topos* can have particularly sacred overtones and thus determining whether the word refers to the more general meaning of “the place of x” instead of the “holy place of x,” and possibly later a stand-in for *monastērion*,



63. Mud brick and stone walls in the West Court of the Holy Topos of Apa Epiphanius.

requires more context than is often found in documentary evidence. Only two letters mention a cell (*ri*). One refers to the author petitioning for prayer while sitting and writing in his cell.⁷⁸ The other text is a rare use of a cell to indicate the rooms (*ri*) of a house of baking, possibly suggesting the location of a bakery for bread.⁷⁹ The graffiti offers a bit more evidence to see that the residence was called a *topos* in Coptic by a visitor, Apa Severus, “the man of Antionoe.”⁸⁰ The Greek graffiti left by a family of physicians who apparently were visiting the monks explicitly asks for protection over their house (*oikos*).⁸¹ The choice of using *oikos* for the home of lay individuals instead of *topos* and *manshōpe* adds further support to the importance of differentiating between the built environments of monastic and lay communities.

What was built at the Holy Topos of Epiphanius the Anchorite? The central residence included the modification of a rock-cut tomb with the addition of interior features such as a niche for holding a lamp. Nine additional mud brick rooms were built on the terrace, creating a settlement leading into the tomb that could be closed with the addition of several doors and a main entrance (see Fig. 63). This settlement probably was the first residence for four monks. The first phase did not include a boundary wall, but did have a kitchen with a bread oven and a loom pit. Three additional tombs were later



64. Mud brick buildings in the East Court showing an open courtyard (center) and a small, enclosed oven in the foreground.

converted to monastic residences and sit outside of the boundary wall of the Holy Topos of Epiphanius.⁸²

Then, in the mid-seventh century, as suggested by Catherine Thirard's reconstruction of the phases of occupation at the site, the monks built additions to the settlement and remodeled some of features of the earlier terrace dwelling.⁸³ The second phase of building included the erection of the first mud brick tower that was purportedly built by Epiphanius, Psan, and Jacob. A second tower was built to the south along with two courtyards, with one to the east and the other to the west. Both courtyards have ovens and contain doorways for granting access outside of the thin, enclosure walls (see Fig. 64). In the east courtyard, Room 11 is a brick paved hall of about 5×20 meters, with a built-in bench for hosting visitors.

The most visible feature of the site still today is Tower A. It measures roughly 10×10 meters, and Winlock suggested it originally had three stories with rooms reaching 5 meters high (see Fig. 65).⁸⁴ The tower is an impressive example of construction with thicker wall bases to carry the weight of the upper levels. Monastic builders designed the first floor to be for storage, a pattern observed also at the village of Jeme. The tower had two shafts for latrines

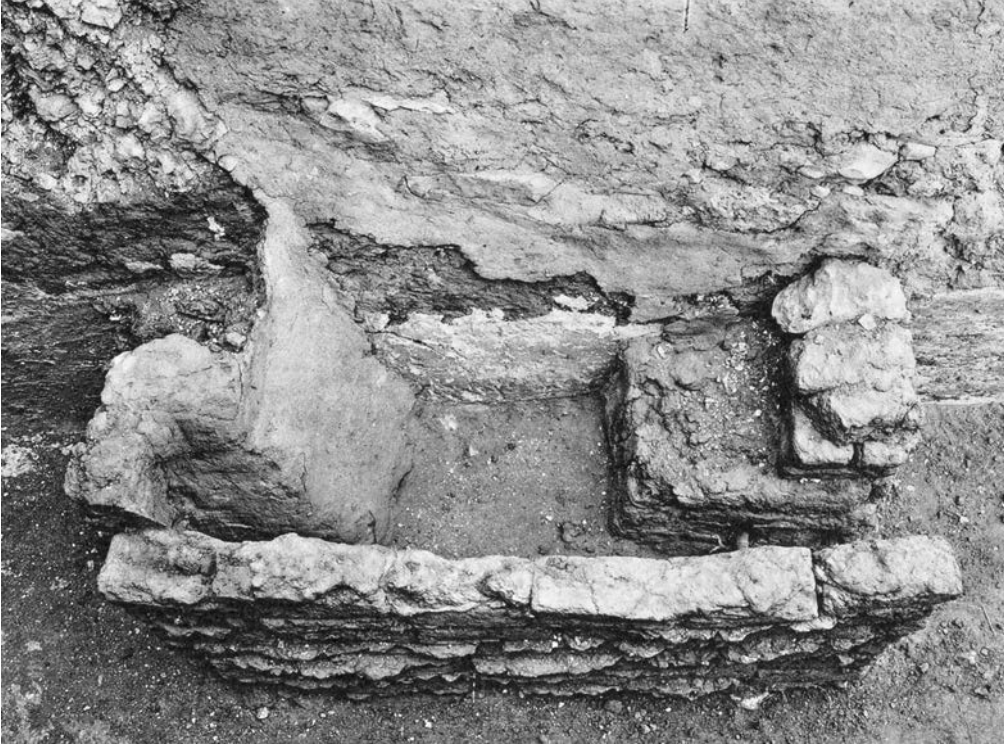


65. View south toward the Holy Topos of Apa Epiphanius with the large tower on the left and the boundary wall for the settlement built around Daga's tomb.

that carried waste out into a bin on the east side of the tower.⁸⁵ Built-in niches, a staircase, and floors made of straw, mud, and plaster show the type of features built into the tower.

The third phase involved the incorporation of another Middle Kingdom tomb, belonging to Sebeknakht, to the east of the terrace of Daga. Mud brick Rooms 13–20 created a cluster of rooms with two built-in benches, white plastered walls, a staircase, limestone chip flooring, and a kitchen with a bread oven.⁸⁶ A lower terrace to the southeast holds a smaller terrace residence built out from a tomb and with mud brick rooms, fully equipped with built-in benches. A cemetery with eleven bodies was located outside of the walled settlement on the north side. The male bodies were wrapped in linen strips and then covered with leather hoods and leather aprons, presumably reflecting the clothing the monks wore during life.⁸⁷

From the letters and archaeological remains it is clear the monks at the *topos* participated in the production of textiles, rope, and leather goods.⁸⁸ Evidence has been found of leather working and tanning;⁸⁹ weaving wool and linen articles; woven baskets and mats; rope production;⁹⁰ woodworking; and agriculture.⁹¹ At the lower East buildings we see remains of sandal soles and scraps



66. One of three sunken loom pits built against a wall with mud brick and plaster.

of tanned lambskin with the wool still intact. Several letters (nos. 380, 438, 446, 371, 368) refer to hides, the acquisition of skins, and the request for leather goods. Several individuals wrote letters to the monks to request linen grave shrouds and bundles of rope made of grass and date palm fiber.⁹² Loom pits and the remains of several woven objects indicate that the community worked with the very materials they were selling to other individuals in the region. The inhabitants of this site were craftsmen who were dedicated to their professions. Burials of monks outside of the boundary wall show they were buried with their well-worn leather aprons that they wore during their daily labors.⁹³

Additional material remains included tools and products associated with spinning, weaving, dyeing, and net-making. The same materials appear in the monastic correspondence.⁹⁴ Eight loom pits suggest that at one point eight individuals lived or worked together to produce the textiles mentioned in the letters. The looms consist of a sunken pit cut into the bedrock with a weaver's seat either on the floor surface or built into the pit (see Fig. 66). The foot pedals were fixed to a wooden bit at the opposite end.⁹⁵ Aside from the burials, excavated textile remains are simple weaves with the width of the products ranging from 75 cm to a broad cloth for a grave shirt at 125 cm in width. Shroud tapes were small weavings of 1–1.5 cm in width and 15–20 cm in length. Made of

dyed wool threads, the tapes were unlikely for everyday wear. The textiles and woven materials are the greatest evidence of the daily activities of the monks. Winlock and Crum stressed the appropriateness of this industry for monastic living. The skill was easily learned, materials for weaving were available in the nearby valley, and there was always a high demand for the products. Above all, the skill lent itself to contemplative activities; the repetition of the weaving was conducive to the recitation of Scripture and for extended periods of prayer.

An equally important craft at the site was leather production. The leatherwork found at the Topos of Apa Paulos, to the north, and at the Holy Topos of Epiphanius indicate that monks were deeply engaged in the production of goods not just for monastic use but also for those living in the villages. The “anchorite aprons,” as Winlock referred to it, was one example of a monastic artifact.⁹⁶ These garments were placed on the monks at burials found also at Dayr al-Medineh and at the Topos of Apa Abraham.⁹⁷ The interpretation that these aprons were worn in life, and possibly associated with one’s trade, is based on the fact that they were placed over the body after it was wrapped in linen and then wound by the shroud tapes. The aprons were attached by leather straps over the shoulders and then tapered to hang down between the knees. The preserved examples demonstrate that the aprons were used extensively, with several patches to a single skin apron.⁹⁸

The Holy Topos of Epiphanius the Anchorite was a small and short-lived site compared to that of the Monasteries of Apa Apollo and Apa Jeremais. The community in Thebes testifies to the monastic building boom of the sixth century that allowed for so many different types of monastic built environments to dot the Egyptian landscape. Despite its small size, its discovery, thorough documentation, and subsequent publication by Winlock and Crum, provided the first comprehensive synthesis of artifacts, archaeology, and history of Egyptian monasticism.

THE HOLY MONASTERY OF APA THOMAS IN WADI SARGA

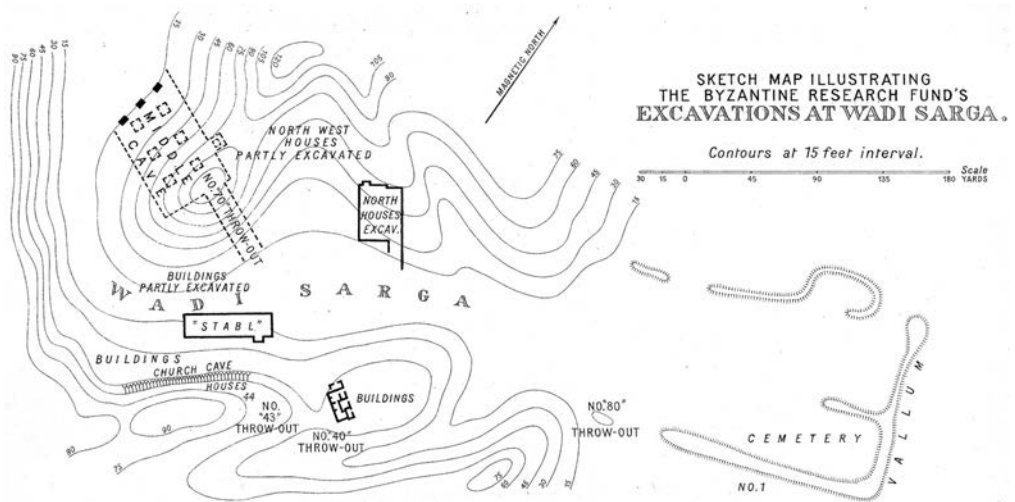
Wadi Sarga is home to a community known in its letters as the Holy Monastery of Apa Thomas. Located about 11.5 kilometers inland from the Nile today, the site is located roughly 25 kilometers between Lycopolis (north on the west bank) and Antaiopolis (south on the east bank; mod. Qaw al-Kabir).⁹⁹ By the sixth century, the fortunes of Antaiopolis seem to have shifted and there was a potential decline in the region.¹⁰⁰ Like other new Late Antique settlements, Wadi Sarga, and numerous monastic settlements in Middle Egypt, emerged amid the shifting economic landscape and participated in stabilizing the local economy through creating self-sustaining communities.¹⁰¹ The structures at the Holy Monastery of Apa Thomas, as the community was known, illustrate

how builders used the natural landscape to create a new purpose-built settlement (see Fig. 11).

Abandoned galley quarries, temples, and tombs were considered boons for monastic builders and others looking for functional spaces for domestic use.¹⁰² The walls of a quarry, often already squarely cut by quarrymen, provide a well-protected and pleasant stone structure for a church or chapel. Communities did not need to finance the cutting, dressing, or erection of a stone edifice to create a church that would then fall under the jurisdiction of ecclesiastical property. Rather, they could hire a stonecutter to modify walls of the abandoned quarry with an apse, a few cupboards, and a door. Additional treatments to finish the space would include a plasterer, a painter, and a scribe to decorate the space according to the community's needs with image and text. Sometimes quarries were modified for domestic habitation such as can be seen at Dayr al-Dik (see Fig. 22). Frequently the quarries were reserved for a community's "monumental" architecture. Monks built their residences, made of mud brick or small stones, as extensions from rock-cut buildings out onto a terrace.¹⁰³ The quarry and other rock-cut features provided a natural relief and protection from the environment.¹⁰⁴ Equally important for comfortable living within a wadi would be an awareness of the winds, the safety of walking between various areas of the settlement, and the possible dangers of a rapid rainfall that might destabilize a mud brick-built structure.

Campbell Thompson conducted two months of excavation at Wadi Sarga from November 16, 1913 until January 28, 1914.¹⁰⁵ During his work, his colleague, architect F. A. Richards, mapped the site and drew plans of individual buildings (see Fig. 67).¹⁰⁶ The site's entrance was marked by the construction of a stone barrier that Campbell Thompson called a vallum. He regarded this man-made feature as a deliberate effort by the community to hide the settlement from view.¹⁰⁷ However, the collection of stones more likely reflects the activities of the quarry by making both a physical marker for the quarry road and for providing available stone for transport. A boundary wall of stones, only partially preserved, seems to have outlined parts of the settlement.¹⁰⁸ No gatehouse was apparent, and thus how individuals encountered the site is unclear, although it is likely from the north entrance of the wadi.

From the mouth of the wadi, the site has five areas of human construction, as one moves south into the wadi proper. On the south slope one encounters the tall, two-story, mud brick walls of a domestic area (see Fig. 68). Below the houses on the crest of the hill, at the base, are individual buildings. In the wadi's valley, the monks built a rectangular stone enclosure, most likely used for housing animals.¹⁰⁹ The amount of correspondence between the monastery and surrounding communities suggests animals were moving frequently to and from the settlement. The north slope of the wadi includes two densely built blocks of residences. The houses are built on terraces with narrow streets



67. Site map of the Monastery of Apa Thomas at Wadi Sarga.

Published in 1922 for the W. Crum and H. I. Bell *Wadi Sarga: Coptic and Greek Texts from the Excavations Undertaken by the Byzantine Research Account*. Courtesy of the Trustees of the British Museum.



68. View east across the monastic settlement of the Monastery of Apa Thomas at Wadi Sarga with a view toward the cultivated fields.

AES Ar. 720. Courtesy of the Trustees of the British Museum.

between the houses.¹¹⁰ The density of construction is reminiscent of the later seventh- and eighth-century houses at Jeme. Numerous staircases grant access between the various houses and terraces. The use of staircases may reflect the need to build safe forms of access between the residences built on the steep slopes of the wadi.

Further south, into the wadi proper, Campbell Thompson explored several gallery quarries, which he called caves.¹¹¹ In these spaces he found extensive evidence for how the community modified a quarry on the south side of the slope, the “Rock-Church,” to include an apse with an elaborate figural program showing Christ offering the Eucharist to the Apostles.¹¹² The church and its paintings are perhaps the most well-known elements of the structures at Wadi Sarga. While the paintings include Coptic labels for the various saints on the walls, there is little evidence present within the church to point to its relationship to the surrounding structures.

In contrast to the church, the residential areas provided an enormous amount of material for dating the settlement, including ostraca, papyri, ceramics, lamps, leather shoes, mats, nets, baskets, and textiles.¹¹³ The ceramic and numismatic evidence points to an occupation in the late fifth century with the site’s abandonment by the eighth century.¹¹⁴ The north cluster of houses, nos. 1–33, was divided between seven terraces cut into the slope (see Fig. 69).¹¹⁵ This engineering decision indicates an important consideration of how to modify the landscape while also assessing potential risks to the buildings. Masons used stone boulders for the foundation of the lower terraces along with carving into the cliff face to ground the structure to the hillside. When possible, the builders constructed rooms against each other to enhance stability of the structures.¹¹⁶ Mud brick walls were finished with mud preparation layers and covered with white plaster (see Fig. 70). Campbell Thompson comments in passing that some walls were “adorned with frescoes of saints, or in one case, a lion, and graffiti,” although he does not elaborate beyond this similarity to the technique at Jeme (see Fig. 44).¹¹⁷ Many rooms were equipped with built-in benches or beds, on the north-side end of the rooms, made from mud bricks or carved from the limestone slope.¹¹⁸ Unlike the rooms at Bawit and Saqqara, rooms at Wadi Sarga did not contain clear evidence for the use of a prominent central east niche. However, the architectural feature may be missing owing to the low height of preservation of the east wall or that at this community the private area for prayer was not as central to the community’s religious practices as at other sites. The north walls, for example, are better preserved as they abut the hillside, whereas the other sides were in significantly poorer states of preservation, since they were exposed to the elements. A few east niches are found in other rooms, but more information is needed to determine if these were used for paraliturgical activities.¹¹⁹ The majority of the rooms were roofed with reeds and palm tree trunks, although a few were covered with barrel vaults as



69. Plan of Rooms 1–33 at the North Houses at Wadi Sarga. Redrawn by Ross I. Thomas. Courtesy of the Trustees of the British Museum.

seen in photographs of the rooms and in Campbell Thompson's plan for the residential quarters.

The final area of interest for Campbell Thompson included explorations of middens, or "throw-outs." He identified a handful of middens at the site and found the features interesting enough to excavate, despite their relative distance from existing structures. One midden, no. 80, contained 669 ostraca on top of an ash layer.¹²⁰ The texts from the middens became the basis for Walter Crum and H. Idris Bell's publication of the Greek and Coptic texts from the site. Not included in the publication are several ceramic vessels that were also inscribed and noted by Campbell Thompson.

Crum's analysis of the textual evidence led him to ask an essential question: What type of monastic settlement was the Holy Monastery of Apa Thomas? "Was it organized as a coenobium, with common dwellings and central church, refectory etc.; or did the community consist of hermits, inhabiting separate cells and caves and meeting periodically at the common church?"¹²¹



70. In-progress excavation of the North Houses at Wadi Sarga. Note the combination of small boulders and cobbles used with mud brick and plaster.
AES Ar. 719. Courtesy of the Trustees of the British Museum.

It is clear that the archaeological material in the north residences confounded Crum. He queried whether we could know if it was a Late Antique village or a community for monks.¹²² With regard to the insight the architecture offered, he remarked: “Nothing helps us decide.”¹²³ I would argue that much of the archaeological material at Wadi Sarga helps establish the site as monastic, but its organization may be less clear.

The settlement was located in an abandoned landscape that was not previously occupied.¹²⁴ The layout of the settlement has distinct districts for housing, animal pens, middens, and a church, and the place of the congregation. The latter structure, identified in the documentary evidence, points to a communal space at the site that may be a smaller version of the long halls present at the Monastery of Apa Apollo. The presence of ovens is mentioned in passing, and Campbell Thompson does not clarify whether the features are bread ovens or stoves. Additionally, while he notes that there are many ovens, there is not enough information available to discern if these are private kitchens or communal kitchens. The difference would certainly help in the identification of whether the settlement was communal or not. Finally the presence of built-in benches or beds, painted programs with monastic saints, and dipinti

further increases our confidence, archaeologically, that the site is a monastic settlement.

The documentary evidence, discarded primarily into disparate middens, also supports the interpretation of the archaeological evidence that the site is a monastery. Greek and Coptic papyri and ostraca recovered through Campbell Thompson's excavations illustrate that the site was known as the "Holy Monastery (*monastērion*) of Apa Thomas" and also as the "Rock (*petra*) of Apa Thomas."¹²⁵ When Somers Clarke commented on the site in his 1912 publication, he referred to the site as *El Medina el Sarga*, and identified its quarry church as part of a Christian community, but not necessarily a monastery.¹²⁶ Clarke was not unusual in his particular concern to document and record the history of Christian monuments of churches and not settlements. His assertion, then, that the settlement was a town was just as logical as that of William F. Petrie's earlier assessment that the site was a Christian town in 1906.

The community's written texts date from the sixth and seventh centuries and illustrate the community's activities as concurrent with the monastic settlements at Bawit and Epiphanius. Apa Thomas's biography is unknown to us, but he appears in numerous excavated commemorative stelae and ostraca along with six other individuals, who might represent the founding members of the monastic community.¹²⁷ Although few letters explicitly comment on the physical nature of the settlement or the built environment, two letters apparently written between residents at the monastery demonstrate they referred to their homes as "dwelling places." One letter, *O.Sarga* 100, written by Patermoute to another monk, allows us to read one example of how spaces were described.¹²⁸ Patermoute directs the recipient of the of the letter to go to the "dwelling place (*manshōpe*)," then to "the church (*ekklesia*)," and finally to the "place of the congregation (*sunagōgē*)." Patermoute wants his brother to collect some items from the window at the church, which is near the "place of the congregation," and to fetch a net. The text is broken at key places such that we do not learn what should be done at the "dwelling place," but we do learn the spatial orientation of the church is on the "north side" of the "place of the congregation."¹²⁹ Here the "place of the congregation" suggests a physical location separate from the communal space of the church, which was not identified during the excavation. A second letter, *O.Sarga* 102, directs a monk to fetch a variety of items from a dwelling place (*manshōpe*), including a balance, net cording, and six "hands" of tow (likely flax) for another brother named Apollo. Only one extremely fragmentary ostraca includes a reference to the cell (*ri*) of a monk.¹³⁰ Additional support for interpreting how monks described their built environment at Wadi Sarga might be found in the dipinti from the walls of the rooms excavated by Campbell Thompson. Although he did record some of these in his notes and they were published in the 1922 volume, they are few in number and usually consist of the name of an individual

and his position; there is no indication in the recorded dipinti of references to the physical structures built at Wadi Sarga.¹³¹

Monks from the Holy Monastery of Apa Thomas were engaged in activities with diverse communities including a monastery of women, whose location is unknown; sailors in need of supplies; bishops who on occasion stayed at the site; other monks at nearby communities; and a host of lay community members. Contrary to Campbell Thompson's vision that the monks at the Holy Monastery of Apa Thomas had tried to hide themselves from the world, the archaeological and documentary evidence for the settlement nestled on the wadi's slopes would suggest the monks built in a location that created a comfortable community that was visible from the cultivated fields as the white walls of the buildings popped out against the limestone cliffs. The placement of windows, the use of stairs, and sound construction techniques worked together to illustrate how the builders modified the natural environment for comfort in living in the wadi and protection from the potential dangers of the climate and landscape.

THE TOPOS OF APA PHOIBAMMON IN THE ROCK

The archaeological remains of a small monastic settlement south of Thebes present another story of how the monks worked with the natural environment to build a community. Like the monastic community at Wadi Sarga, we know very little about why a monastic community was formed at the Topos of Apa Phoibammon in the Rock or what led to the selection of its location. The community does not have a literary foundation story that explains how it came to be. Although we know of four different monastic saints known as Phoibammon, it is not clear which one may be the namesake for this community.¹³² Martin Krause's work on Bishop Abraham reconstructed a plausible chronology in which Abraham was a monk at the settlement and then relocated north to the Topos of Apa Phoibammon at Dayr al-Bahri.¹³³ The documentary evidence from the site did not include any dated material, but the texts are consistent with material from the sixth century and later.¹³⁴

The settlement is hidden away without any views of the Nile or agricultural fields. The settlement is located 10 kilometers south of the northern Topos of Apa Phoibammon, on the terraces of Deir el-Bahri, and the Holy Topos of Apa Epiphanius.¹³⁵ The buildings, made primarily of cobblestones and sparingly of fired bricks and mud bricks, cluster at the end of a narrow wadi, which has a steep cliff face, about twenty-five meters high, creating a natural semicircular amphitheater for the settlement (see Figs. 13 and 71). In many ways this community was living in the inner desert and in a place that was not easily seen, in comparison to the outer desert communities that could be seen and were active with the local communities. Therefore, if we want to consider the



71. Cleft that encompasses the stone buildings of the Topos of Apa Phoibammon in the Rock, south of Thebes, Egypt.

differences between the visible and invisible monastic settlements in Egypt's landscape, the Topos of Apa Phoibammon in the Rock is an excellent example to consider as one that was hidden in the inner desert.¹³⁶ The latter was part of the invisible fabric of Thebes and served a variety of functions as a monastic settlement engaged with the community.

The graffiti, dipinti, and ostraca provide sufficient documentation to understand how the monks viewed their community. The most common appellation for the site was "*Tōpos* of Apa Phoibammon," which occurs five times, or simply "*topos*," which is used four times to describe the physical settlement.¹³⁷ While the monastic residents refer to themselves as monks (*monachos*), they do not use *monasterion*, *manshōpe*, or *heneete* to refer to the built environment. A few other dipinti provide additional insight for describing the community. In a dipinto painted on the west side of the circular cliff, Abraam invoked the founder of the community: "Holy Apa Phoibammon, the martyr, inside the Rock. Pray for me, I, Abraam."¹³⁸ This toponym reflects a particular sense of geographical physicality as Phoibammon is tied to the natural environment "inside the rock (*petra*)."¹³⁹ It may be the same Abraam who also paints dipinto on the north side of the cliff indicating he is the house manager (*oikonomos*)

for the “*laura* of Saint Phoibamon.”¹⁴⁰ The single use of “*laura*” to describe the settlement is important, as the term is not commonly used at other monastic settlements, for it is far more common in Palestinian monasticism.

The community apparently offered refuge to fugitives, as a graffito explains how soldiers pursued someone – unnamed, because the graffito is damaged – and he found sanctuary “inside this *topos*.”¹⁴¹ Other graffiti record the presence of refugees living with the monks, and thus we might infer that the environmental conditions of the community offered the necessary shelter for those seeking a period of exile, away from the villages and the valley communities.¹⁴²

The settlement is made with a combination of materials readily available, such as cobblestone, and man-made materials, including sun-dried bricks, fired bricks, and limestone slabs.¹⁴³ The presence of fired bricks is unusual, as many monastic settlements are made with materials requiring less labor than firing bricks. The limestone slabs could be procured from the nearby quarries. Unlike slabs at Saqqara that were reused as commemorative markers, the pavers at the *topos* were not inscribed. Builders also used the natural contours of the cleft to design built-in beds with headrests in one cell. The community had a church, a reception hall, and stables. They held their food in three silos on the northeast side.

The settlement was enclosed by a set of buildings on the south side. The rooms completed the circle of the settlement’s design with a prominent gatehouse in the southeast that served as the central entrance to the community. After entering, one could turn to the west toward the church, which was identified on the basis of paving stones and a barrel vault tomb of a monk, identified as the superior of the community by the excavators. The plan does not show any signs of an apse or even an east niche. However, the walls are preserved to a height of only 40 centimeters, and thus the evidence may not be preserved to determine the use of the various buildings with great certainty.

Walls were plastered with lime and show signs of red dipinti and simple figural paintings. Roofs were simple halfa and woven palms.¹⁴⁴ This style of roofing is used often with cobblestone constructions that were not significantly bonded by mortar and thus could not bear the weight of a heavy roof. The community had seven circular ovens ranging between 0.50 and 1.20 meters high, making the ovens of a typical height of bread ovens found elsewhere.¹⁴⁵ The presence of so many ovens and the silo may point to the community’s work as bakers. No evidence appears for linen production, such as loom pits, or leatherworking, as seen at the monastic settlements in Thebes. The extensive ceramic wares still visible at the site after excavation indicate the community was heavily occupied and participated in extensive trade with the number of transport vessels clustered in the discard piles after the excavation (see Fig. 72). The documentary evidence is not extensive enough to enhance our understanding of the community’s economic activities.



72. Ceramic body sherds disposed at the site after excavation in 1948 and 1949 at the Topos of Apa Phoibammon demonstrating the range of transport vessels used at the community.

Of all the sites considered so far, the Topos of Apa Phoibammon in the Rock exhibits the unique relationship between the environment and monastic needs. We can see how the physical shape of the wadi provided the contours of the settlement. Rather than cut into the wadi's natural cliff, monks built against the wall to provide a cool and stable wall for their construction and used local boulders to construct the buildings (see Fig. 73). Small clefts were blocked with bricks and stones. The physical seclusion of the site makes it a good example of a monastic community removed from the daily travel and interactions of the Nile Valley.

THE CELLS AT KELLIA AND PHERME

In his recounting of the settlement history of Kellia in 1974, C. C. Walters wove together the narrative accounts of the history of Kellia as presented by Hugh Evelyn White in 1932 with the results of the earliest excavations at Kellia in the 1960s. Walters accepted Evelyn White's view that monks initially lived in simple dwellings that were enclosed by a wall in the fifth century, creating "independent compounds" – a term he left undefined.¹⁴⁶ Then, by the seventh



73. Stone walls of monastic rooms at the Topos of Apa Phoibammon in the Rock.

century, Walters believed the monks enlarged the enclosed areas and built additional buildings to form a “genuine *manshōpe*, the creation of which probably involved the evacuation of the compounds.”¹⁴⁷ Despite Walter’s recognition of the dwelling place (*manshōpe*) as a built form, the idea was not adopted in discussions of monastic built environments. The recent excavations at Kellia, like those at Bawit and Saqqara, produced an enormous corpus of material that significantly altered our view of the material culture of Egyptian monasticism.¹⁴⁸

Dating the settlements that comprise Kellia–Pherme is complicated. For example, the typology of the eleven documented churches at Kellia reflects a sequence of building programs from the early fifth century until the seventh century.¹⁴⁹ Also, while it is true that there are almost 600 residences at Quṣūr al-Ruba’iyyat and as few as 150 at Pherme, it is not clear that all 1,500 residences found at Kellia–Pherme were occupied simultaneously.¹⁵⁰ Inscriptional evidence offers some aid by establishing a broad chronology for the sites, but even at each site, the ceramic evidence offers a different range between complexes, thereby suggesting that the area has a relative chronology that needs to be examined.¹⁵¹ While scholars agree that the seven sites make up the settlement of historic monastic settlements of Kellia–Pherme, very little documentary evidence exists for proving the site was known as Kellia.¹⁵² The most

convincing evidence for the identification was found in 1976, but not published until 2013. Several sherds excavated at QIs I bear *tituli picti*, or painted inscriptions, on several ceramic vessels excavated from the church found within the monastic residence. Two letters, *ek*, represent an abbreviation for the “Church of Kellion” (*ecclēsia kelliōn*), which appears in the full form on two vessels.¹⁵³

The inscriptional material helps solidify the interpretation that we are looking at a monastic settlement and not that of Late Antique town. The content of the inscriptions is consistent with monastic dipinti seen at other sites including the lists of Biblical and monastic names, commemorative prayers linked to a famous deceased saint, and petitions for prayer and support on behalf of the dipinto author. Based on epigraphic and ceramic evidence, which greatly enhances the historical record for Kellia proper, Quṣūr ‘Isa is regarded as the earliest site founded in the fifth century, with Quṣūr al-‘Izayla occupied between the sixth and eighth centuries, and finally the latest settlement being the extension to Quṣūr al-Ruba’iyyat from the seventh to the later eleventh centuries. The majority of the dipinti are written in Boharic Coptic, the dialect of Lower Egypt, and in Greek.¹⁵⁴ Dates are occasionally given in the Age of the Diocletian and the Age of the Martyrs; the use of both dating systems points to a late seventh- and eighth-century occupation when this dating system was commonly used.¹⁵⁵ A rereading of a dated inscription may be a record of the community surviving a plague in the eighth century.¹⁵⁶ While Greek and Coptic graffiti and diptini are present in most buildings, only a few Arabic graffiti appear at all.

The first structures at Kellia–Pherme were built from sun-dried mud bricks for one or two monks in the fifth century. At Quṣūr Higayla, Building 39–40 nicely illustrates more than ten phases of construction, with the initial form consisting of two separate early buildings that were later joined together.¹⁵⁷ The general plan included a large enclosure with a small house attached to the northwest wall. The dwelling was multiroomed with an open-air courtyard, a main entrance, a kitchen in the courtyard, and rooms for one or two occupants, one of which was comparatively larger than the others.¹⁵⁸ The core of the dwelling included a vestibule leading to a large room, with smaller, undecorated rooms off to the sides. Builders and artists gave the central room, usually located in the northwest corner, special attention compared to the other rooms. A highly decorated niche pierced the east wall, sometimes with molded plaster imitating stone framing, and painted with red, green, and yellow patterns. More modest east walls had a central niche and hastily brushed red bands encompassing the niche in contrast to others that were undecorated or given less attention. The courtyard was large enough to hold a small garden and a well or cistern for monitoring the dwelling’s water supply.¹⁵⁹

Excavators interpreted the larger rooms with the central niche as a prayer space in which the residents gathered others together for daily work and

prayer.¹⁶⁰ A smaller set of rooms extend directly to the cooking facilities, which is interpreted as the realm of the disciple and reflect his duties as one who tends the fires in the kitchen. The room identified as the “oratory” is most often linked to the realm of the elder of the residence.¹⁶¹ Additional features illustrate that the buildings were well designed for desert living, with sophisticated ventilation systems with clear alignment of airshafts, windows, and wooden framing to close some openings. Some staircases led to the domed roofs (see Figs. 14 and 42). Silos, latrines, urinals, towers, and water delivery systems (including plastered cisterns made of fired bricks) indicate that the settlement’s residents were experienced in the needs for storage, sanitation, and water delivery systems for the community. Smaller features also reoccur throughout the various residences. The inclusion of embedded animal bones and horns in the walls as hooks has generated discussion as to if they served in the daily process of braiding rope, weaving, or other monastic labor. Small ceramic vessels were used in a variety of architectural contexts. Some functioned as shelves for oil lamps and sockets for keeping doors open, while others were used in the construction of the kitchens serving as flues, component parts of the mud daub ovens, and containers. The combination of kitchens, cisterns, storage rooms, and double halls demonstrate that the monasteries were able to be self-sufficient while also meeting the needs of the growing number of visitors, perhaps both short and long term, to the settlements.¹⁶²

The general plan was then modified in later phases, since the large enclosed space could accommodate additional living quarters. A second set of rooms would mirror those of the original plan and subsequent rooms and modifications were made to reflect an increase in Kellia’s population. It is not entirely clear whether a wall enclosed the various mounds, and there is little to point to for a perimeter wall surrounding the settlement like one might see at Bawit or at Sohag. Nineteen towers were added at the site of Qusūr al-Izeila and reflect the similar style of the multistory, quadrant tower seen at the Holy Topos of Epiphanius at Thebes.¹⁶³ In the final century of occupation, monks were living in residences only 5 meters away from each other.¹⁶⁴

The later phases of construction at the seven sites involved the rapid expansion and modification of many buildings.¹⁶⁵ Churches, martyria, and double-roomed halls, often covered by domes, were not a part of the architecture of the site with the first communities.¹⁶⁶ The presence of these new features, along with reception halls, led excavators to conclude that the monks began to accommodate numerous visitors as the popularity of Kellia–Pherme grew, as the residence became multifaceted complexes (see Fig. 74). This interpretation is based on the idea that nonmonastics needed spaces for worship and religious activities and the residences of the monks were not appropriate spaces for such activities. The increased popularity of Kellia as a spiritual center of ascetic living is clear in both the number of dwellings that were expanded and the



74. Excavated monastic dwelling place at Kellia showing the multiroom expansion after the sixth century.

effort to include larger spaces that could accommodate a significant number of individuals.

The writings of Palladius, Evagrius, and John Cassian, just to name a few of the famous residents of Kellia–Pherme, indicate the popularity of the sites for monastic and nonmonastic visitors.¹⁶⁷ Kellia, as the culmination of such travels, was a vital center in this imagined geography of desert asceticism. Graffiti on walls throughout the sites indicate that people came as temporary residents and valued the *martyria*.

The placement of the graffiti and *dipinti* is specifically tied to passageways, foyers or vestibules, and the rooms with a prominent east niche. It is important to be aware that while we describe these spaces as “oratories,” it is not a term that appears in the epigraphic references for the built spaces at Kellia. When Arabic *dipinti* and graffiti are found, it is usually on the outside of these interior spaces. Most of these examples are considered to post-date the dissolution of the community. While books are found often at monastic sites, we do not have much by way of written material, such as ostraca, papyri, or manuscripts, to examine at Kellia–Pherme, except for the texts on the inscribed walls. This

is likely a function of the regional climate in the Delta and not because literacy was not valued.¹⁶⁸

For the community's view of its built environment and the value of the dwelling we can look at the epigraphic evidence from within the residences themselves.¹⁶⁹ QR 306, surveyed in 1982 and excavated in 1983, represents a typical dwelling at Kellia–Pherme that was built in the late fifth century and was abandoned after the ninth century. The core dwelling included a courtyard, leading to a set of eight rooms on the northeast. A door in Room 4 provided private access to a suite of rooms for the elder monk. The disciple had only one room and a storage area where his work was closely tied to the nearby private kitchen. The configuration is the first phase of settlement and reflects the type of dwellings dated to the late fifth and early sixth centuries.¹⁷⁰ The spaces in which monks prayed were clearly marked by elaborate niches in east walls. An individual was not confined to simply one room, but lived within two or three rooms. One room could be dedicated to sleeping (usually assumed to be the undecorated room), another dedicated to prayer (as suggested by the numerous inscriptions found within the rooms), and a third room to manual labor.

The second phase of QR 306 includes the addition of two rooms to the west of the kitchen. The additional rooms reflect the increasing wealth of a new occupant, who was able to remodel his dwelling in the seventh century. The third phase is distinguished as the period in which large audience halls were built to accommodate visitors and pilgrims. Two rooms, one of which was a double-hall room, provided evidence for excavators that Christians were visiting more frequently at Kellia, especially in the early Islamic period. These additions were also equipped with a separate kitchen, which allowed for the preparation of separate diets, one for lay and the other for monastic, and to accommodate more people.¹⁷¹ A solitary room added at this phase had a highly decorated eastern niche with accompanying smaller alcoves. Rugs were even painted on the floor, adding to the uniqueness of these spaces in comparison with the older suites of the dwelling's owners.¹⁷²

The phases of expansion and modifications at Kellia testify to the responsive needs of the community to its own popularity with monks and with visitors. In addition to the architectural evidence that narrates this history, the walls were covered with ninety-nine inscriptions and several painted images, both geometric and figural. The generations of occupants at Kellia provide us with a dwelling that contains the very voices of ancient monastics, telling us how they understood these spaces in relation to their spiritual lives. The images and graffiti on the walls are incidental records of the active participants in ascetic living.

Most of the inscriptions in QR 306 are in Boharic Coptic and twenty were written in Arabic. Their poor state of preservation also hinders the historical data that we can extract from their appearance.¹⁷³ Three dated Coptic dipinti suggest the building was in use in the early eighth century (in years 702, 727,

and 737 CE).¹⁷⁴ Three other Coptic inscriptions identify a monk called Orion, the possible founder or father of the dwelling.¹⁷⁵ Inscription no. 53 is particularly descriptive of the expectations of inhabitants and reveals a glimpse into monastic life within the built environment. The prayer is not directed to God or Christ, but rather to the brothers who will pray in the dwelling (*manshōpe*). Two monks, Artimodore and Ammoni, ask that the other brothers to remember Orion and the other brothers. This direct appeal to other monastics who use the space for prayer points to the spiritual practice of intercessory prayer not only for one's self but also for others. Inscription no. 56 was directly addressed to Jesus to have pity upon the brothers who resided in "this dwelling place."¹⁷⁶ These two petitions are reflections of similar requests seen at other monastic settlements by which individuals address the inhabitants of the dwelling place, knowing they will in fact read and respond to the requests.

Inscription no. 23, located in Room 2 on the western wall of QR306, offers a historical account of the concerns about safety and protection. The text evokes earlier monastic stories of thieves in the desert seeking the possessions of monks. Readers are told that if even a small plate or bowl is removed from the dwelling place, the thief will be cut off from God forever.¹⁷⁷ The curse is upon the defiler of the dwelling place and the very items that are housed within. The fact that this inscription is found within the rooms with the most inscriptions, paintings, and architectural features devoted to communal prayer and activities indicates its importance and that it might be directed to those who are not regular visitors to the site.

As with most of the inscriptional evidence, the inhabitants and majority of visitors are men with names such as Joseph, Stephen, Isaac, Bishoi, John, Mena, Kosma, Paphnouti, George, and Amoun.¹⁷⁸ If this is reliable, then we are looking at a male, homosocial community. Rarely are the men given descriptors as to their village or occupation. Some inscriptions mention a parent, but not much that would allow for any genealogical reconstruction. Unlike the epigraphic evidence from Bawit and Saqqara, women are rarely mentioned at Kellia–Pherme either as saints or as living individuals of the community. At QR195, a Coptic commemoration is offered for a recently deceased Helen, a thirty-seven-year-old widow.¹⁷⁹

A few inscriptions directly address the reader and indicate how we might reconstruct habits of writing, reading, and prayer within the various residences. Inscription nos. 139 and 152, as examples, specifically ask for "anyone who reads these lines" to then remember the individuals named.¹⁸⁰ The direct invocation to readers and viewers illustrates that specific areas of the buildings were textualized spaces.¹⁸¹ Individuals who entered the space were expected to read and understand the requests. Just how often prayers were offered and over what span of time the dipinti were placed on the walls is more difficult to articulate, as dipinti and graffiti crisscross each other over time.

Several scholars had noted the evolution of settlement from a small collection of rooms to a large enclosure with several specialized areas.¹⁸² Philippe Bridel examined a number of entrances and their locations within the dwellings at Kellia, asking how entrances may affect ascetic practice and access into secluded areas.¹⁸³ In particular, he sought to explain how these areas were used when additional rooms were added and even when churches were incorporated into the complexes. Bridel argued that there is a type of a two-roomed hall that is distinctive in its use as an area for visitors or pilgrims. The rooms are often separated from the other dwelling areas and they appear to be connected with smaller quarters for sleeping for either the host or for overflow when visitors were numerous.¹⁸⁴

The longevity of the settlement, which appears to have been abandoned in the ninth century, suggests that there was a revitalization and expansion of life at Kellia that was not sustainable or perhaps feasible at Wadi Sarga or Esna. How to track the additions and remodeling at various dwellings is not easy to do. For example, Georges Descœudres explored the economic health, growth, and decline of Qusūr al-Izeila.¹⁸⁵ The ability of the Kellian community to replicate its domestic structures again leads to the question of who was responsible for their construction and maintenance.¹⁸⁶ And, given the long history of habitation, did the body of knowledgeable masons and architects evolve during this time? Addressing the question of whether the monks were masons or architects, Denis Weidmann said he believed they could build their own cells, but when the settlement became too complex, they had to rely on others.¹⁸⁷ Although not explicitly stated, Weidmann implies that these would be expert masons and architects outside of the monastic community. Who then ensures that the monastic structures are in fact reflecting the three centuries of tradition? In the end, the site of Kellia represents a site that is still under investigation to explore its site-specific history, the evolution of the communities, spatial divisions, and how a community maintains its identity when its founders are no longer commemorated. While scholars look to Kellia as the founding settlement of Egyptian monasticism and espouse its value for early monasticism, the archaeological evidence requires a careful repositioning of Kellia as a densely occupied site in the sixth, seventh, and eighth centuries.

The lack of diverse documentary sources from Kellia does limit our ability to understand how the community functioned and how monks may have interacted with lay workers, merchants, and visitors in the centuries after the deaths of the Evagrius, Palladius, and John Cassian, whose tenure at the site was in its earliest period. Accounts of monastic authors fill in the gaps, but the stories are significantly biased in their particular approach to writing a history of early monasticism that was then recast in subsequent centuries.¹⁸⁸ We can observe from the many phases of expansion at Kellia that following a particular structural design was integral to the built environments at Kellia. We

still must rely on the monastic narrative to find a possible reason for why this area of the Delta was selected and think in broader terms about how monastic communities selected underutilized landscapes to build in. By taking care to meet the needs of their community, the monks built and continued to expand in ways that proved the design for the monastic buildings suited the needs for themselves and for their visitors.

DWELLING PLACES AT ESNA

The site of the monastic dwellings at Esna is located 55 kilometers south of Luxor in Upper Egypt, 4 kilometers inland on the west bank of the Nile. Esna is more popularly known for its famous Ptolemaic temple than for its two Coptic monasteries (Dayr al-Fakhuri and Dayr al-Shuhada') and a cluster of fifteen monastic complexes in the low desert to the west (see Fig. 15).¹⁸⁹ Both Dayr al-Fakhuri and Dayr al-Shuhada' have a literary and historical heritage, but we are not as fortunate when it comes to the monastic settlements in the desert. Esna, unlike the Monastery of Apa Apollo at Bawit with its foundation narrative and its early appearance in the *History of the Monks in Egypt*, is less well known and offers a good example of a small monastic site.

Esna is an unusual monastic settlement in Egypt.¹⁹⁰ Perhaps the most important aspect of the site is the fact that the monastic dwellings were cut into the desert floor and entered by a staircase, at ground level, which led down into an open-air courtyard.¹⁹¹ A similar settlement with subterranean chambers was found at 'Adaïma, to the north of Esna. The two sites may represent a very conscious effort by builders to work with the geomorphology of the landscape to build better structures. Based on the ceramic and epigraphic evidence, monks resided at Esna between 500 and 630 CE.¹⁹²

The oratories of the nine monastic geostructures have generated interest in that they follow a regular pattern of design with a central eastern apsidal niche, which is flanked by two or more squared niches. The wall is often decorated with crosses, prayers, paintings of monastic saints, and a customary listing of patriarchs, prophets, and Egyptian monastic saints below the central niche. The courtyards were painted with crosses and dipinti and led viewers to the entrance to the oratory, as the highest percentage of crosses were found outside the entrance to these rooms. Additionally, the kitchens in all nine buildings are built with bread ovens, small stoves, and chimneys. These features, along with reservoirs for water, storage, and stoops, all point to a well-planned settlement. A further demonstration of the skill of the builders is the inclusion of sand barriers or revetments, sometimes 70–100 cm high, to prevent sand accumulation in doorways, especially to the oratories (see Fig. 25).

In the analysis of the dipinti, graffiti, and inscriptions in the various residences, Serge Sauneron concluded that two monks initially lived in each residence.¹⁹³

At some point, three of the nine residences were expanded to include what Sauneron calls a double hermitage. He admits that over the 130-year history of the settlement it is difficult to know who lived here beyond the identification of a few monks who inscribed their names on the walls of the various structures. In total only six names, Mena, Phib (twice), Victor, Touan, John, Philox, Abraham, and Paphnoute, appear as possible founding residents based on how their names appear in intercessory dipinti. The texts do not explicitly identify them as founding residents or as occupants of the dwellings. Additionally, the prayers are not dated, and therefore when they were placed on the walls of the residences is unknown. But, given the limits of the evidence, Sauneron posits that we could imagine them as the initial occupants of these dwellings.

The identification of a dominant group of individuals at Esna is admittedly restricted. The multiroom residences are quite elaborate, if not luxurious, for only two individuals (see Fig. 16). The location of the dwellings suggests that the residents were in some type of community; we could think of this in the loosest of terms as physical proximity for safety or in a stricter sense as a conscious desire to live together. In either case, a few questions are necessary to think about how this site developed into the form it has. Were the Esna monks the builders of their own homes? If not the builders, did they agree on what the buildings should contain? Did they supervise the construction? If not built or designed by the residents, how do we find the historical intentions of the actual builders and/or architects?

The inscribed texts in the form of dipinti do not elucidate how the residents regarded the various spaces or the dwelling as a whole. However, one dipinto, in Hermitage 4, refers to the dwelling place (*manshōpe*), which is a hallmark of how monastics described their spaces.¹⁹⁴ Painted on the east wall of the north oratory we see the intersection of architecture (the east wall and niche) and text (see Fig. 17).

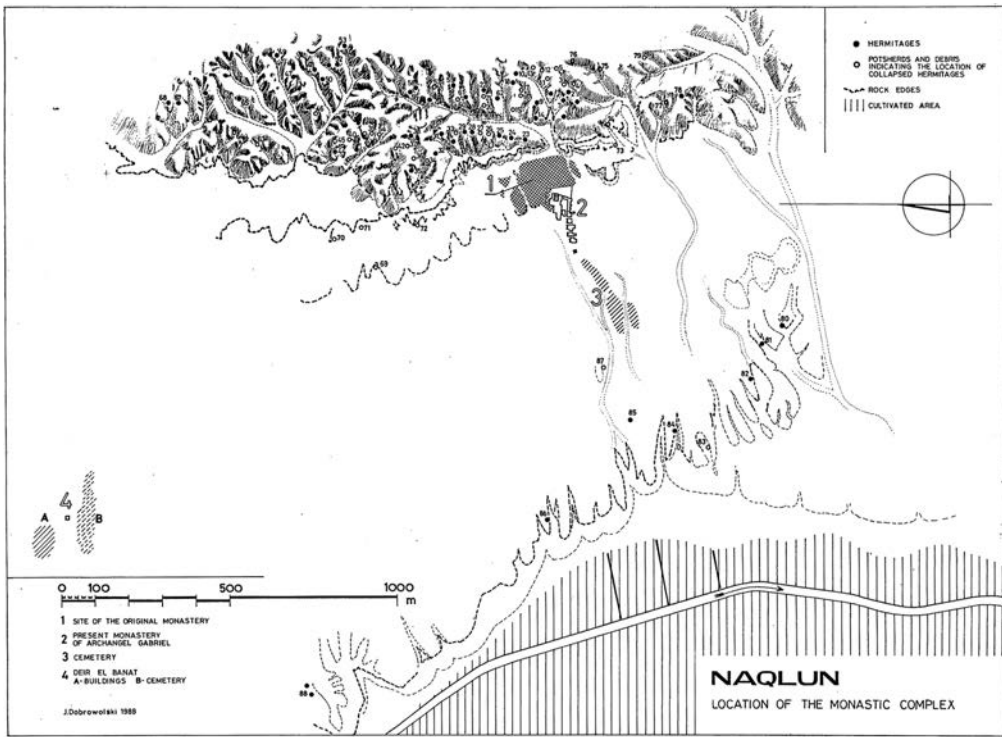
Esna, therefore, while significantly smaller and shorter-lived than Bawit was, exhibits the same qualities of a monastic settlement. The community elected to build in an underutilized landscape and to construct entirely new structures that were a significant departure from any Egyptian architecture of the past. The spatial configuration of the settlement does not exhibit any adherence to street planning, and they did not have a boundary wall. They also did not have a church, martyrion, or communal hall. Whatever work was done at the community took place within the residences and not in separate workshops. The interior of their rooms also exhibited diagnostic features of a monastic settlement, for only one or two rooms within each residence received additional attention in terms of interior decoration. These rooms had a main east niche that was often painted with crosses or flanked by figural paintings. Coptic dipinti appeared more frequently in these rooms and included the names of Christian saints and monastic fathers. One surviving dipinto refers to the built

environment as a dwelling place, but we have no data to indicate if they conceived of their residences as “underground” or sunken into the desert. Without documentary evidence, it is difficult to know how the monks in this community regarded themselves in relationship to others in the area of Esna or with other monastic communities. However, enough archaeological evidence exists to clearly identify the settlement as a monastic site.

THE MOUNTAIN OF CELLS AT JABAL NAQLUN

The final example is a new excavation of the first large-scale monastic site to be found in one of Egypt’s oases. Dayr al-Naqlun is located in the large Fayyum oasis at the western base of the Delta and 120 kilometers south of Cairo. The settlement covers a 40-hectare area and is thus comparable in area to the Monastery of Apa Apollo, but the settlement design differs greatly.¹⁹⁵ The Mountain of Cells at Jabal Naqlun is one part of Dayr al-Naqlun, which is located by the Bahr al-Gharaq canal in the southeast side of the Fayyum. The site rests in a landscape with shale and limestone cliffs that rise from a desert plain 25 kilometers west of the Nile.¹⁹⁶ Today the site includes a thriving monastery, the archaeological remains of a cemetery, an earlier monastery, Dayr al-Banat (est. 3 hectares), and a collection of monastic residences built in the hills to the east. In Coptic sources, the site is referred to as Neklōn¹⁹⁷ and in medieval geographies as Dayr al-Khashaba and now as Dayr al-Malak Ghubriyal (Monastery of the Archangel Gabriel) (see Fig. 75).¹⁹⁸ Since 1986, Włodzimierz Godlewski has directed excavations at the Late Antique and medieval settlement for the Polish Centre of Mediterranean Archaeology.¹⁹⁹ Tomasz Derda has posited that the Coptic “Neklōn” is a transliteration of the Greek word for “cells.” Based on documentary evidence recovered from within the monastic complexes at the site, we know the community in the hills referred to itself as the “Mountain (*oros*) of Cells (*kellōn*).”

Naqlun is a Christian settlement with three distinct areas of occupation²⁰⁰ The “Mountain of the Cells” is located to the east of the desert plateau where a cemetery, church, and other monastic structures are located. The large portion of the domestic residences was therefore located in the hills where eighty dwellings were built in the nearby shale cliffs. About ten other residences were located to the west of the church, along the canal.²⁰¹ The area between these two sites of monastic habitation is a multiperiod site with a church, two cemeteries (one Byzantine and the other medieval), and medieval monastic structures for a later community that replaced the first community living in independent residences in the hills and by the canal.²⁰² More than 189 bodies of lay Christian men, women, and children have been recovered from the settlement thus far.²⁰³ This discovery further supports the initial impression that the site had a variety of monastic modes of living simultaneously with



75. Plan of the site of Dayr al-Naqlun with various locations of the hermitages, the current monastery, and the early buildings of Dayr al-Banat.

a more communal settlement at the base of the hills and numerous independent dwellings in the hills.²⁰⁴ When Samuel of Qalamun lived at the site in the early seventh century, he spoke to a mixed community of monks and then “lay” individuals, possibly monastic men in training.²⁰⁵ The cooperative nature of the community continued on in the medieval period, where documentary, bioarchaeological, and archaeological evidence points toward a monastic community working with a lay community.

The earliest signs of settlement at Dayr al-Naqlun date to the fifth century, when the community was founded.²⁰⁶ The decision to build in the cliffs and by the canal is not documented in our sources, but it is evident that area was not used in previous periods. While there are many Greco-Roman settlements throughout the Fayyum, the area around Dayr al-Naqlun was not part of any previous settlement and thus exhibits one of the central characteristics of a monastic settlements from Late Antiquity: new settlements in underutilized landscapes. There may have been a nearby village to the community, as documentary sources reflect close interactions with villages not yet identified in the archaeological record. It is possible, according to Ewa Wipszycka, that there was an important proximity to an existing village that helped justify the

location of the monastic settlement.²⁰⁷ Of utmost importance, of course, would be the proximity to the nearby canal.

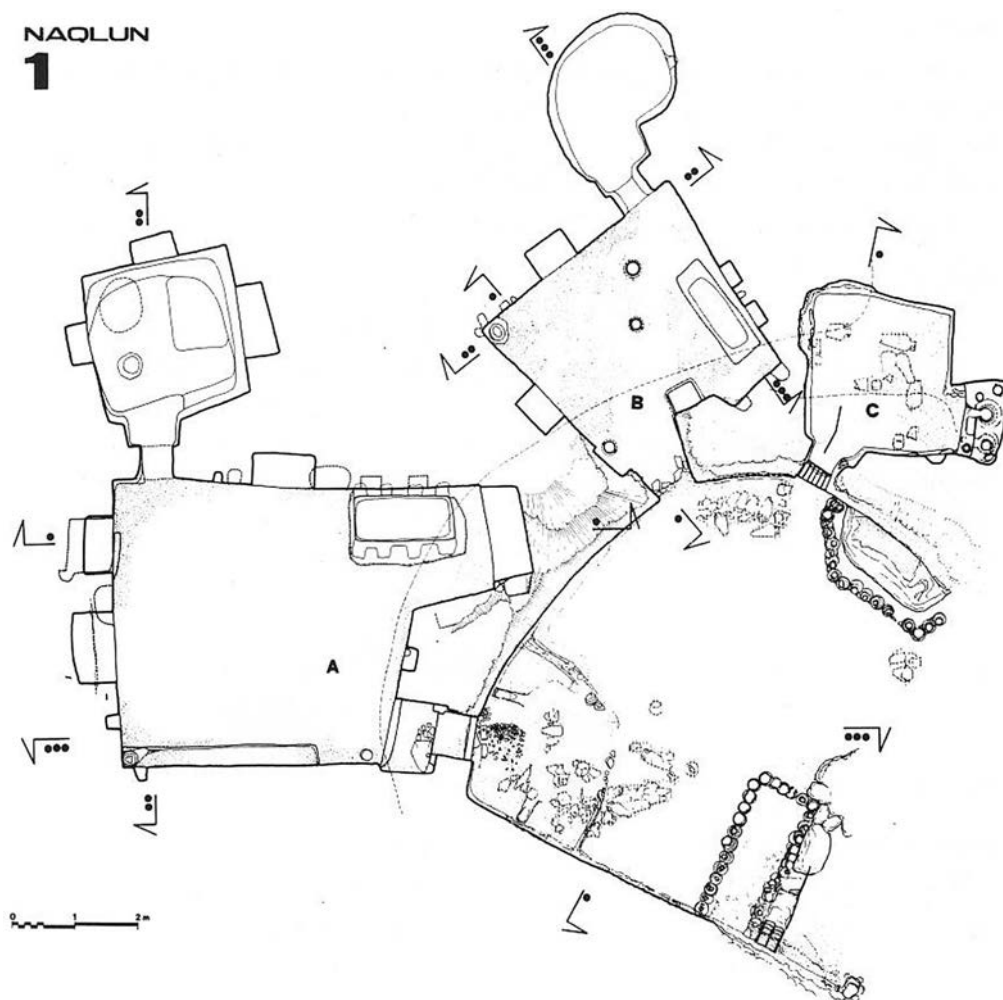
The buildings in Jabal Naqlun illustrate an awareness of how to use the natural topography to simultaneously create community and independence. The cliffs are not the sharply rising limestone cliffs seen more commonly along the banks of the Nile. The hills are gentle slopes of flint, quartz pebbles, and limestone. The upper limits of the hills are conglomerate rock, whereas the base of the cliffs includes strata of soft sandstone and shale. As one considers the placement of the residences in each of the nearly seventy wadis of this hill range, one can easily imagine an architect walking and planning out the settlement with another monastic brother. Monks could live in smaller communities with up to three other brothers and yet have a degree of privacy without total isolation. Only 2 meters separated the nearest dwellings, while the greatest distance between two monastic houses was 40 meters. Thus, there was enough flexibility within the community to allow for those who may have wished for greater proximity to others and for those who desired more physical distance. Collectively each residence was an important component of the Mountain (*toou*) of the Cells.

The Greek and Coptic documentary evidence gathered from the dwellings in the cliffs point to important nomenclature used by the community. In a storage pit in Hermitage 89, a Greek text from August 8, 593 documents a loan of money by Apa Menas, who is identified as from the “the Monastery (*monastērion*) of Kothau on the Mountain (*oros*) of the Cells.”²⁰⁸ We see the identification of Dayr al-Naqlun as the “Mountain of the Cells” and that within that settlement, Menas’s exact residence is identified as the “Monastery of Kothau.” The letter documents a loan to Aurelios Georgios, a son of another monk, Apa Apanagios, who resides in the “Monastery (*monastērion*) of the Tower.” We learn in another document, also found within Hermitage 89, that the “Monastery of the Tower” is another location within the larger settlement. Apa Neilos is a “monk and proestos of the (monastery of) the Tower and of St. Phoibammon of the Mountain of the Cells.”²⁰⁹ In Derda’s commentary on the nomenclature for the settlement and the individual residences he explains that those living in one of the eighty cliff residences were residing in the “Mountain of the Cells (*Kellōn*)” and that the individual residences were known as monasteries. For Neilos, he appears to be a supervisor, *proestos*, for two different dwellings, and Derda suggests that Hermitage 25 is the “Monastery of St. Phoibammon” and Hermitage 89 is the “Monastery of the Tower.”²¹⁰ The term hermitage, cave, or cell is not used. The monasteries were home to one or two monks or maybe as many as six, depending on the number of room-suites extending from a courtyard. Thus, a monastery at Dayr al-Naqlun is a modest residence for a few individuals. Very little evidence remains for dipinti within the dwellings, although a fragmentary dipinto from

Hermitage 89 indicates that bishops visited the space, but the exact word used for the structure is not present.²¹¹

As we can see from the documentary evidence, the monks referred to the built environments as monasteries and as the cluster of monasteries as cells in the sixth century. The *Life of Samuel of Qalamun*, the ninth-century Coptic recension of the vita, makes consistent reference to the *manshōpe* of the monks and that they reside in a monastery.²¹² Therefore, we can see that the evolution of the Coptic expressions for monastic space replaces the earlier Greek identifications for the settlements. With the first survey of the settlement of the site by Otto Meinardus in the 1960s and then the extensive excavation by the Polish Centre of Mediterranean Archaeology in Cairo, the monastic residences have been designated as hermitages.²¹³ Just as with Clédat's first impression that he was excavating chapels at Bawit, the nomenclature used for structures is often dependent on the first impression of the built environment. The structures at Naqlun are very different from the hermitages excavated by Sauneron at Esna as well, and yet in both places the term is used to describe the noncommunal nature of the built environment. At Naqlun we are fortunate to know that the monks referred to their complexes as monasteries, and thus the mountain was filled with small two- to four-person monasteries. This pattern also existed in the south at Thebes, where numerous monastic settlements dot the sacred landscape of the pharaonic tombs, but each has its own name and identity.²¹⁴

The monastic dwellings at Naqlun demonstrate a clear design strategy for constructing the built environment. Some dwellings were occupied only for a few centuries (from the late fifth century until the seventh century); other dwellings, such as Hermitage 89, were occupied continuously from the sixth to the twelfth century.²¹⁵ With more than ninety dwellings already identified, Jarosław Dobrowolski proposed three important features of the monastic settlement.²¹⁶ First, many residences were built at the ridge of the hill slopes, taking advantage of making a courtyard that created a terrace for the building. The courtyard was usually made from mud bricks and mud mortar, whereas the suite of rooms extending from the open-air courtyard into the rock-cut rooms was made from the natural walls of the hills, and then finished with plaster to prevent erosion. Of the residences examined in the hills, each had a private kitchen with many stoves, but did not have an oven for baking bread. Second, ten of the residences were cut into the base of the cliffs in the softer shale and limestone strata. Like those in the ridge of the hills, the base dwellings were also cut into the natural landscape and used a combination of masonry and rock-cut forms to make the dwellings. Those located by the canal appear to have bread ovens, whereas the residences in the east hills do not. Third, only a few residences were built entirely from mud brick and they are located in the desert plateau and do not incorporate any element of the natural landscape



76. Plan of Hermitage 1 at Naqlun. The residence is entered by a courtyard with three radiating sets of rooms cut into the surrounding hillside. Rooms A and B are thought to belong to two different individuals and Room C is the private kitchen with a two-burner stove.

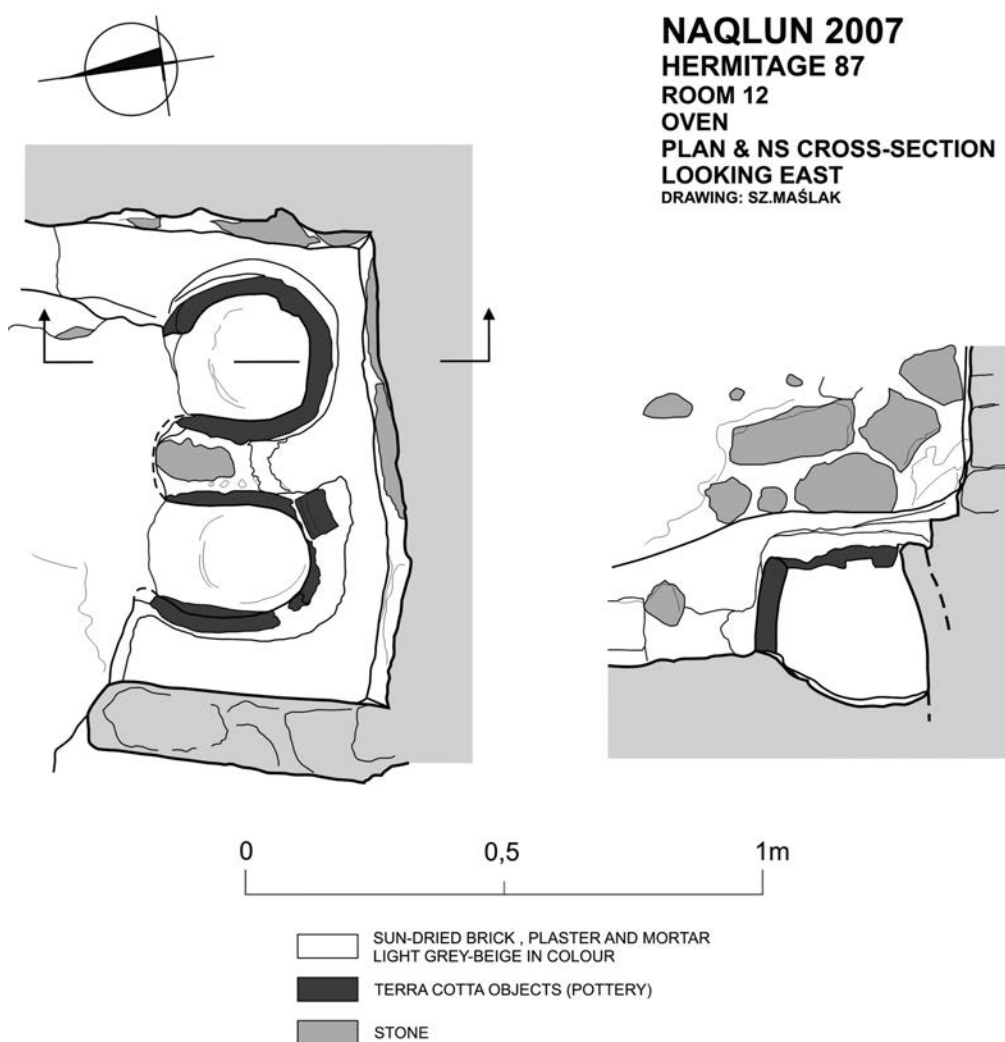
into the form of the structures. Since the majority of the buildings were cut into the hills, it seems that this community had an expressed preference for incorporating the natural topography into their built environments.

In general, the Mountain of Cells at Naqlun included a central, open-air courtyard from which a set of rooms, or suites consisting of a large room finished with plaster and painted with an adjoining smaller room (Rooms A and B), created separate spaces for individuals, along with a private kitchen (Room C) (see Fig. 76). Godlewski argues that the furnishings from within the rooms help define the function of the space. For example, he describes the large rooms as “day rooms” that were finished with plastered walls, painted,

equipped with benches and storage pits, and had a prominent central niche for prayer.²¹⁷ Such a residential plan was a standard layout for monastic space at Naqlun.²¹⁸ The central room was rectilinear with the squaring of walls and the ceiling with a built-in bench on one side and a central niche on an opposite wall. The eastern niche was outlined in some form with red paint or a cross. None of the niches or main rooms were painted with the elaborate painted programs found at the Monastery of Apa Apollo or with the extensive use of crosses as seen at Esna. Dipinti from the large halls reveals that individuals painted their name, occupation, and place of origin – a process of physical petition that is present at most monastic settlements.²¹⁹ The adjoining room was not often cut square and was significantly smaller than the large “day” room. One residence shows that the builders were able to cut beds into the sleeping quarters, but this feature is not present at other hermitages.²²⁰ The walls of the sleeping area were not finished with the same level of care as the central room, and thus the excavators concluded it was of lesser importance and likely for sleeping and storage as it was a private, and less-used, room of the residence. Certainly the lack of windows in the backroom would make this feature cooler in the summer months and warmer in the winter and more appropriate for sleeping. Other rooms extending from the courtyard included a private kitchen and occasionally a bread oven (see Fig. 77). Another room that appears is a reception area that may be necessary for visitors who came to visit the monks. One monk may have served as a local pharmacist or doctor, who needed to treat patients that visited him at his monastery.

Each residence seems to have had enough space for housing at least two individuals if we consider that the backroom was the sleeping quarters. The earliest dwellings date to the early fifth century, with new construction in the sixth and seventh centuries. The builders at Naqlun, like those at Esna, worked with the natural crevices and built geotectures whose stratigraphy is clearly seen in the walls of the dwellings. Many of the large rooms included a storage pit in the floor, which was covered by beams, for holding several items, such as papyri documents, pottery, leather sandals, glass goblets, and rope.²²¹

A typical example of these dwellings is Hermitage 25, which was built in the late sixth or seventh century and was occupied until the ninth century.²²² The residence was occupied in three phases: phase one was the residence of two monks (sixth century); phase two included a renovation and the addition of a third dwelling and kitchen facility to provide residence for three or four monks (mid-seventh century); and phase three was a downsizing of the residence such that one dwelling and a kitchen were permanently sealed off and only one individual resided in dwelling A, which excavators date to the ninth century. Exactly when the hermitage was entirely abandoned is not clear from the excavated material. Debris included sections of texts from the twelfth or



77. Details of a private kitchen and oven in Hermitage 87, Room 12 at Naqlun made of stone, mud bricks, and ceramic sherds.

thirteenth century, but it is not believed that this material points to an occupation in the medieval period. The pottery recovered from the residence ranges from the sixth to the ninth century and therefore supports the occupational history suggested by the textual evidence from the storage pits.

The first phase of Hermitage 25 included the initial construction of a dwelling for two monks: one elder monk and his disciple. The more prestigious monk lived in the largest complex with the equally well-hewn sleeping chamber. Rooms A and B were accessed from the courtyard by a pivot door that could be closed from the inside of the large rooms, thereby granting each resident the privacy and protection they might need. The large room also had

built-in stoops along the southern and western walls. Each occupant, therefore, had the convenience of built-in seating carved from the rock, to alleviate stress on the body while working or praying. Such comforts were needed given the importance of the indoor work that many monks performed within their residence. The main niche on the eastern wall did not have any distinguishing marks, but its location opposite the built-in seating on the western wall follows a pattern of prayer niches with benches seen in other monastic dwellings.²²³ The entrance to the sleeping room was separated from the day room by some textile or mat that hung down from two pegs embedded in the wall above the opening, as the doorway does not have evidence of framing for a closing door.²²⁴ The lightweight cover to the back room provided a resident with the flexibility to have ventilation into the windowless space, while also providing some privacy and protection. The dwelling, as a whole unit, provided a communal area of the courtyard for guests and for work, an enclosed and well-ventilated area for prayer and inside work, and a small private room for sleeping.

The daily activities of the monks are attested to in the papyrological evidence from the residents and from the small finds from their dwellings, such as the remnants of book covers, textiles, rope, ceramic and glass vessels, and the remodeling of their residences over time.²²⁵ For example, *PNaqlun* 35/88 is a short but complete list of products for the abbot of the monastic community. The list includes food supplies for the monks, such as wine, clams, and vegetables.²²⁶ While other economic texts are present, with specific reference to the yield of particular fields, the papyri were also reused by the monks for jotting down biblical texts on the reverse of the letters they received. The texts do not “give information about the topography of the site and the appearance of the hermitages and monastery.”²²⁷ However, the letters found at Hermitage 25 allow us to see it was known as the Monastery (*monastērion*) of St. Phoibammon.²²⁸ Such a designation illustrates the fluidity of nomenclature that we, as modern viewers of the landscape, have been unable to consider until now.

CONCLUSION

The sites discussed in this chapter illustrate the significant diversity of built forms adopted and frequently modified by monastic residents in Late Antique Egypt. The monastic buildings at Jabal Naqlun and Wadi Sarga demonstrate an awareness of how to modify the natural environment for both comfortable living and protection from elements, animals, and possible intruders to the community. Other monastic sites, such as those at Saqqara and Thebes, testify to how monastic communities eventually reclaimed land

that was underutilized. Their locations in well-known landscapes, such as in Thebes, or in areas just above the flood plains, made the monastic sites visible and accessible to a broad community. Finally, monastic settlements also illustrate how monks responded to the natural environment by selecting specific materials for building a settlement. Monks utilized a remote cleft in a wadi to offer sanctuary to those needing more protection, or aligned windows, airshafts, and latrines in a flat desert to make a dwelling more appealing throughout the hot summers.

Despite the grandness of the material evidence from larger sites, I believe that we cannot privilege one type of site over another, for they each have valuable information about the diversity of Egyptian monastic life. The examples I have used throughout the chapter exhibit similar qualities that point toward the identity of their monastic inhabitants, but each site is unique and thereby reflects not only the regional nature of monastic built designs but also the individual nature of each monastic community. Whether a *topos*, *monastērion*, or *manshōpe*, the monastic built environments exhibit shared cultural values of past communities. It is clear from these examples that Egyptian monastics did not follow a binary of site design that led to a division between anchoritic and coenobitic monasticism. The archaeological evidence reveals even more convincingly that this division is one imparted from a world of writers that were not well informed as to what monastic builders built in Egypt. By viewing various residential spaces where monks lived, we can observe how reading the archaeological and textual evidence together can be mutually informative for tracing the history of Egypt's monastic landscape. It was shaped in large part by the construction of the monastic mindscape of the desert by those not concerned to describe the actual desertscape. The materiality of monastic archaeological settlements enhances how we regard the literary construction of the mindscape of Egyptian monasticism in the desert landscapes of Egypt.

CONCLUSIONS

I N THE EARLY EIGHTH CENTURY MERKURIOS WROTE A LETTER TO THREE monastic superiors of the Heneete of Our Holy Apa Paulos “on the mount of the Kastron of Jeme.”¹ Merkurios was writing to Apa Daniel, Apa Iacob, and Apa Athanasios to inform them that he had agreed to the price for the sale of his millstone to the monastic community. He shares his enthusiasm for the sale by stating that he knows that the monastery’s ownership of the millstone will be for their “noble monastery (*monastērion*)” bakery “for the bread of the brethren and as a gift for the charity of the poor.” Following a typical contract sale, Merkurios clarifies that neither he nor his family will ever seek ownership of the millstone and that should the monastery violate the contract, they will pay a fine that is nine times the actual cost of the purchased millstone. Four witnesses signed the contract, which was written by the son of a priest.

The story of the monastery’s millstone at the Heneete of Our Holy Apa Paulos is a story about how an object moved from the hands of a private individual to a monastic community in Thebes. Traditional readings focus on the monks, the seller, the witnesses, and the scribe, as they are the individuals we can see and envision, much like the monastic scribe painted on the wall of Chapel 42 at Bawit (see Fig. 78). It is easy to envision a scribe holding a stylus with his leather pouch over his shoulder while he pens the contract for Merkurios, who apparently is not able to write it himself. But what of the millstone and the bakery? How do we envision the space and the objects or



78. Wall painting of a monastic scribe from Chapel 42 at Bawit.

things that once resided within the bakery? The millstone and the bakery are examples of monastic things that we have more difficulty in seeing and in valuing, but why? What can we learn if we shift our attention to the things within and around monasteries and not just the individuals who shaped monasticism? Can we, as outlined in the preface, frame Late Antique monastic landscapes in a way that includes more things than before?

MONASTIC THINGS AND MONASTIC SPACES

Bjørnar Olsen presents a critical question for archaeologists: “Why has the physical and ‘thingly’ component of our past and present being become forgotten or ignored?”² In asking this question Olsen seeks to revise how we approach the materials of the past and become defenders of “things.” What does Olsen mean? He explains the old approach to studying the past this way:

Just consider how the history of archaeology is narrated. Like all such historiographies it becomes the history of thought, a history of how great minds – or society, politics and ideologies – have invented theories, shaped discourses and created paradigms. The many non-humans mixed into our collective disciplinary life through fieldwork, museums and laboratories are rarely assigned any role in the story ... It is interesting, and probably rather revealing, too, that the discipline known as the discipline of things, even the ‘discipline of the spade’, devotes so little time, so little place, to its own instruments, equipments and dirty practices, when recollecting its own past. This mundane trivia of the practical world, this repugnant kitchen of dirt and soil, becomes a source of embarrassment for a discipline aspiring to the ranks of the social sciences.³

In many ways, Olsen outlines what I have laid out in this book: “a history of thought” about monastic archaeology in Egypt. And this history has been necessary because the field of Egyptian monastic archaeology is only just now able to reflect back on its past as more scholars are committed to the field of Byzantine archaeology in Egypt and with the rise interest in monastic archaeology specifically. The field is not one that is well worn, as is implied by Olsen’s survey of the field of archaeology in other areas. And so, such a history, I believe, is absolutely necessary. But I also agree with Olsen that more needs to be done that goes beyond creating new paradigms that involve the nonhuman subjects – the sites, the buildings, and the individual spaces within monastic communities. I realize that buildings are “big things” and admittedly they are not the “things” that Olsen necessarily means, but for this moment in time, I believe they do constitute “important things” – “monastic things” that have not truly received the attention they deserve. Therefore, one answer to Olsen’s question as to why the “‘thingly’ component” of the monastic past “became forgotten or ignored” is critical to explore if we are to write things, people,

and landscapes back into the past. Because monastic material was thrown away, stripped from its original contexts, and neglected as being historically uninteresting, we are now in position to put it back into the story, along with the monastics who interacted with it, and the landscape, which has been overlooked for too long.

One of the central challenges still in looking at Late Antique monasticism is the belief that monastics embraced some form of austerity that separated them from things when in fact all the documentary evidence, and even the literary at times, clearly states the opposite. By tracing the history of perceptions of monks with things and places, I have deliberately told a story that walks between the lines of historiography, methodology, theoretical readings, and constructing new paradigms through archaeological and textual analysis. It is risky, I admit, as it will engender objections, but it also may spur new assessments about how we read the material within Egypt and also more broadly to the world of monasticism in the Mediterranean. It is also important to remember that Byzantium and Byzantine archaeology, in general, are undertheorized and thus well positioned to benefit from a theoretical turn.

One way to reconceptualize the Egyptian monastic landscape is to consider Tim Ingold's notion of the *taskscape*.⁴ The taskscape moves us as viewers beyond the Egyptian landscape and the monastic built environments, as outlined by Tom Bartuska, to look specifically at the tasks or activities of monastic individuals within space. It is not focused on the land or the environment, *per se*, but rather on the *interaction* between the monastic individual, the space in which activities take place, the sensorial encounter through various actions, and the movement in and out of those spaces. For Ingold the landscape is "the congealed form of the taskscape," for it is "made up of all the tasks people undertake" and it is "through the taskscape, bodies become constituted through landscape, and landscape through bodies."⁵ The mutuality of influence is important as it causes us to reconsider how Late Antique monastics experienced the landscape and how the landscape experienced them.

If we return to the monastery's new millstone, it can be a central character in how we see the landscape. Where was the millstone cut? What journey did the millstone have from its original landscape to its taskscapes for Mekerios and then for the monks at Apa Paulos? How then did the millstone change in response to the work it conducted in the monastery? And where did it finally end up after all its work as part of the bakery? Such questions reflect one way to address Olsen's assertion that archaeology has studied things purely for "methodological and epistemological reasons, to reveal the extra-material cultural processes that produced them (behaviour, action, mind ... The materiality of past societies is mostly seen as the outcome of historical and social processes that are not in themselves material, leaving materiality itself with little or no causal or explanatory power for these processes."⁶

Focusing on the epistemological value of millstone may seem to take us far away from the monastic landscape and too deeply into archaeological theory. I would propose that it does not. In fact, a consideration of “monastic things” seems foreign and too theoretical in large part because it requires us to take a point of view that such materials can have an impact on our perception of Late Antique monasticism. To put the objects that moved into and out of monastic spaces as central characters in the story of Egyptian monasticism is an additional way in which we can shift our perception of how we reread excavated spaces. Another example would be to think about the “monastic things” missing from the sleeping chambers. If we read all the sources, we can begin to see that sleeping quarters had mattresses, pillows, lamps, hooks, blankets, and books and, yet, how often are those things integrated into the discussion of the “empty” and “undecorated” rooms that appear in an excavation report? They are empty because the things are no longer in the rooms and found during excavation. Plus, we cannot know with certainty what types of bedding were used in the spaces. What happened to the bedding? Did they move with monks as they moved out of residences and into new spaces? Olsen warns “there is still a tendency in many studies to overemphasize the human-subjective and mental dimension of how people relate to landscapes and monuments.”⁷ How then do we find the benefits of considering the landscape, monuments, humans, and things within a monastic context without overstating the cognitive engagement that monks may have had with the landscape and their built environments?

THE MATERIALITY OF THE NATURAL ENVIRONMENT

One approach is to begin with the environment with its physicality and materiality. The tripartite nature of Egypt’s landscape is a central figure in any consideration of how monasticism became a component of the Late Antique landscape. The dimensions of the inner and outer desert, the close proximity of the desert escarpment to the cultivated fields, and the ever-fluctuating nature of the Nile’s banks through the inundation are all essential “things” to the story of the Egyptian monastic landscape. While monastic literature offers stories about why monks elected to build where they did, the rationale for those choices is easier to understand once we look at how the landscape itself takes form and changes forms throughout the seasons. When we examine the Egyptian monastic built environments we can observe that they were designed for comfort and protection in a landscape not traditionally occupied for long-term habitation. Monks needed spaces that were uncontested for establishing their new communities. At first the claim for “comfort and protection” may sound antithetical to the nature of monasticism if we are to read the hagiography and travelogues as the guide to the natural environment. Selective passages

from monastic literature certainly lend themselves to a discourse of discomfort and danger in monastic living as part of Lars Fogelin's description of the "generalized landscape." In the end, the discourse of discomfort and ascetic suffering is not tenable when we look at the physical environment and the monastic built communities.

The idealized landscape was a selective reading presented by monastic authors and admirers of Egyptian monasticism to focus more on the individuals and their self-sacrifice and holiness. Discomfort then sits at the heart of the narrative of the monastic life in which monastics are seen as suffering, battling demons for those not as capable, and always vigilant on behalf of the world. The battles were both interior and spiritual, but rarely were they dangerous to the point of undermining basic needs for sustenance and shelter.⁸ Most monastics preferred some type of long-term and dependable shelter that could offer protection from animals and the elements along with comfort to make living in the new landscapes possible.

There are numerous examples of monastic settlements in which builders engaged directly with the natural environment to transform and modify it for suitable living. Natural caves, abandoned tombs, and quarries were all considered useful landscapes for new dwellings as builders could build geostructures without major investments in masonry.⁹ Monks at Naqlun worked in a diverse landscape. Some settled in the pebble cliffs, following the topography of the gentle wadis that divided up the mountain. At Wadi Sarga, we observe how the design of the settlement adjusts and followed the natural landscape to create a protected community from flash floods and from the heat. Monks used abandoned quarries and built structures following the topographical variations in the wadi, and then atop a wadi plateau. All forms reflect a response to the physical nature of the existing landscape. At both sites, communities considered the need to use the environment and its natural landscape for building an appropriate community for their brothers. Can we know how this knowledge was acquired in any concrete terms? We can only see the final resolution of experimentation, if it happened, whereby various types of stones, mud, and fired bricks, and variations in plaster enabled a builder to design a wall or a residence.

The archaeological evidence for monastic dwellings at Naqlun exhibits central features of a community intentionally adapting the natural environment to construct an effective environment for monastic living. The spatial configuration, the design of a dwelling, and how the residence was marked for monastic habitation provide evidence for a design that was deemed appropriate and suitable for modifying the hills for new settlements. The documentary accounts of receipts, medical lists, prayers, and letters help us see the physical activities that would take the monks between their homes in the cliffs and the community area and church down in the valley. This evidence, along with the physical

topography of the three areas at Naqlun, demonstrates a sensitivity to the environmental conditions of living in the wadis, the importance of rock-cut rooms for working and sleeping, and the advantages of the topography. It created a balance between the large community identity of the Mountain of the Cells with individual residences of monasteries that made up the mountain.

Both the Mountain of the Cells at Jabal Naqlun and the Monastery of Apa Thomas at Wadi Sarga exhibit significant modifications to the natural environment to create a settlement that was comfortable for long-term habitation. Whether it was the use of sleeping chambers cut deep into the heart of the cliff or the use of the hill's natural stone for foundations, monastic builders learned how to adapt to the materials of the landscape to create spaces that suited their needs for a new homosocial community.

THE DESIGN OF THE MONASTIC BUILT ENVIRONMENT

The Egyptian monastic built environment is an important “thing” that has been overlooked and understudied in comparison to generations of attention given to monastic texts. This fact is simply a product of training and interest. Many scholars of Late Antiquity and medieval studies are more familiar with monastic literature and the role of Desert Fathers than with the physical evidence of the actual monastic communities. As mentioned at the outset of this study, the limited examination of monastic archaeology in Egypt is only one reflection of the broader challenges for archaeologists working in the fields of Late Antique and Byzantine archaeology in general, where Classical archaeology and Egyptology often dominated the fieldwork of early excavations.¹⁰ New approaches to looking at the field of Byzantine studies, such as the essays in Roland Betancourt and Maria Taroutina's *Byzantium/Modernism: The Byzantine as Method in Modernity* (2015), reflect the importance of looking at how perceptions of the past are modified, muted, and then marketed for a new period. The distaste for monastic “ruins” among the lauded pharaonic monuments played a pivotal role in the disinterest in Egypt's monastic past. But it is not just our near contemporaries who are to blame, if blame is to be assigned at all. Readers of monastic literature accepted the idealized, mythologized landscape as an actual landscape, and thus any encounters were bound to be shaped by the monastic mindscape found in writings of monastic leaders. Therefore, placing a spotlight on the physical, monastic built environments is a necessity as Ewa Wipszycka stated in 1995:

The contribution of archaeology in shaping the picture of Egyptian monasticism has been quite modest for some time. It has essentially been restricted to illustrating literary texts, to explicating the realities of daily life of the monks with the help of objects coming from monastic sites ... Confronted with the texts of monastic rules, the hagiographic

works, with apothegms, the archaeological data seem to have only secondary importance.¹¹

Wipszycka's comments from more than twenty years ago are still true today, except that now we have a much larger body of archaeological evidence to examine and integrate into the history of Egyptian monasticism.

Let's consider two monastic communities built in two very different geographical settings. As contemporaries, the two communities offer new insight into monastic living. The first is located in the Delta, a location where few monastic remains have been discovered or recovered. The second is equally unique in that it is hidden away in the cleft of a wadi, far away from other monastic communities, south of Thebes. The former is the location of what scholars identify as the famous Kellia, so often described in the *Sayings of the Desert Fathers*. The latter is the home to a monastic community known as the Topos of Apa Phoibammon in the Rock, but not attested in sources outside of the Theban area. Kellia was home to a massive community that was not as quiet and remote as the *Sayings of the Desert Fathers* might suggest. The Topos of Apa Phoibammon, in contrast, was not known outside of Egypt, and had the remoteness that Kellia did not. The built environments in both locations include physical features that help us reconstruct the relationship between monastic communities and the natural environment. These two sites, along with the material from Bawit, Esna, Naqlun, Saqqara, Thebes, and Wadi Sarga, demonstrate how built environments are contextually based by the physical landscapes in which they resided. By looking at the settlements within an environmental landscape, we are better equipped to see how the construction of buildings reflect a recognition of the importance of water storage, food production, and a keen awareness of the materials needed to best suit the human needs in a diverse environment.

Hundreds of multiroom, monastic complexes dot the flat desert plain of the northwest Delta. The buildings bear clear signs of several phases of expansion from a fifteen-room building to structures with sixty rooms, chapels, reception halls, and numerous kitchens. Monastic builders transformed a portion of the desertscape that was previously used for salt mining and housing seasonal crews to a community with permanent residences for an ever-evolving monastic community. The design of the dwelling places required careful consideration of the environment of the Delta. How could the monks access and store water in location not intended for long-term residency? Where could monks grow food when agricultural fields were not nearby? What type of construction materials and methods would create comfortable living quarters for settlements removed from the Nile and its agricultural fields? What spatial configurations offered the best arrangement of private and common rooms for fostering a comfortable and protected residence? Finally, since

monastic literature was not primarily concerned with describing the relationship between the environment and monastic individuals, but rather matters of spiritual growth and teaching, what sources can be pieced together from the literary and epigraphic sources to enhance our understanding of the relationship between monks in Kellia and their environment?

The decline of monasticism in the Delta is a story shaped in large part by the diminishing needs for monastic communities in the ninth and tenth centuries. Many of the large settlements, such as the Monastery of Apa Apollo and the Monastery of Apa Jeremias, were in their final stages of occupation in the ninth century. Smaller communities located at Esna, Thebes, and Wadi Sarga had ceased to exist after the seventh century. The residents left their settlements and many belongings. But where did they go? At Thebes and Naqlun we can observe a process of consolidation whereby monastics restricted themselves into more efficient and protected communities. At Naqlun, the monks in the mountain monasteries moved down to the valley; at Thebes, the monks in *topoi* consolidated and built around churches or joined a larger settlement, such as the *Topos* of Apa Paulos. A similar story emerges for Kellia, Nitria, and Pherme. The monastic settlements in Sketis had provided papal candidates for the Egyptian church, whereas the other sites were outside of the realm of direct ecclesiastical control or interaction. Sketis, therefore, was part of a changing political and religious landscape, whereas the other settlements reflected the needs of earlier generations. Monks relocated either to the monasteries of Wadi al-Natrun or to those around Alexandria. Their former homes at Kellia, not visible to travelers on the Nile, slowly faded from the religious and visible landscape of the Delta. And the legacy and importance of Kellia, in particular, lived on in monastic literature and history as an idealized settlement.

The density of settlement at Kellia-Pherme makes it possible to reconsider a settlement history of monastic habitation. In contrast to the smaller sites at Esna, Thebes, and Wadi Sarga, the decades of research at Kellia help us consider a sizable community, how its identity was shaped through petitionary requests, and whether dominant individuals may or may not have played a role in establishing that identity. In the literary tradition of the foundations of Kellia, we learn Amoun and others found solitude and privacy in this location. It was a respite from the noise and popularity of Nitria, which was north. While the name Amoun certainly appears in the *dipinti*, his name is never honored for being of any particular significance as we see the reverence for Shenoute, Jeremias, Apollo, and Phib elsewhere. Amoun's memory as the founder of the community is not commemorated or used to create an identity for the site.

With more than 1,500 buildings, it is surprising that there is so little evidence to turn to for constructing how the community's identity was created and reinforced once we move into the fifth century and later. The architectural regularity in the division of rooms, their spatial configuration, and how

the buildings were modified to accommodate a population increase point toward a robust monastic community changing their living quarters and public spaces to meet the demands of more monastics and visitors. Differences certainly emerge within the buildings such as how paint was applied to the walls in marking niches, designs for crosses, layers of dipinti applied over earlier prayers, and representations of animals. Structurally, the buildings followed a site-specific plan that worked well with the natural environment. What can we learn about the relationship between communities, the landscape, and the built environment?

First, we can place the builders, whether lay or monastic, within a wider context of the sixth-century Late Antique milieu. They were influenced by the monastic genealogies (clearly seen in the formulaic inscriptions they placed in the residences), liturgies, and built environments found throughout Egypt.¹² In general terms, the monks participated in a broader regional domestic reclamation of Egypt's landscape that now included the outer desert – a process that clearly supported a range of new monastic settlements in form and function in the loosely administered regions.

The layout of the Kellian structures and the individual features of windows, alignment of airshafts, and placement of kitchens and niches reveal a shared knowledge likely acquired through generations of masons, stonecutters, and plaster tradesmen. The execution of the construction and replicated layout reveals a conscious, objective choice. The community's identity is most evident in the architectural plan and how the structures become literally a part of the desertscape.

Second, at the Topos of Apa Phoibammon in the Rock, we can observe significant regional variation in building styles and materials that point to the adaptive nature of monastic constructions. The *topos* was located in a physically remote area of the desert south of Thebes and in a location known more for quarrying activities and mining than for any pharaonic monuments. The point of access to the settlement could be known only if one knew the quarry road marker and understood that the collection of boulders was not just a natural formation. On walking into the wadi's entrance, one would need to know that there was a settlement at the end because there was little structural evidence of any habitation along the path. Finally arriving at the cleft, a visitor would see a settlement made of stone, much like the structures found along the footpaths at Amarna. The materials at the Topos of Apa Phoibammon were local materials that were built against the cleft to take advantage of the natural shade that could be produced by the sharp rise above. Did the monks who settled here rely on local quarrymen, who had made similar temporary shelters during their seasons of work? Or were some of the monks quarrymen themselves and therefore knew what were the most appropriate materials for the environment? In comparing Kellia and Phoibammon, we can observe how the

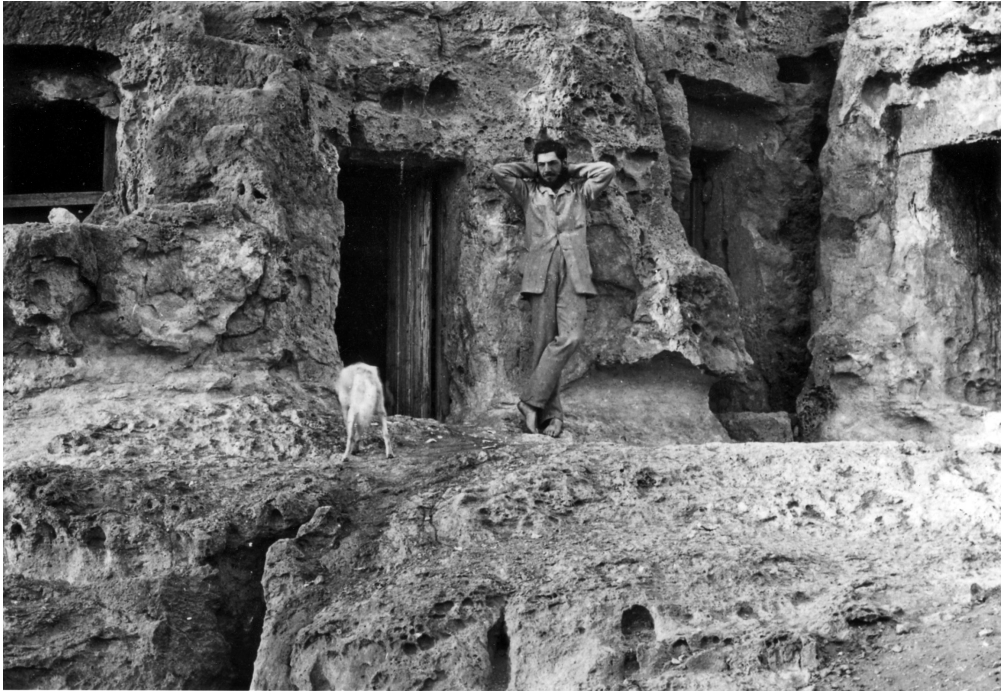
design of the settlements reflected the natural environment, but perhaps also the style and nature of their monastic community. Did residents at the Topos seek to be in a hidden community to offer refuge for those fleeing others? Why did the Kellian monks multiply their complexes by adding rooms, chapels, and kitchens?

While Kellia and the Topos of Apa Phoibammon in the Rock are vastly different in their overall design, the two communities both existed during the sixth and seventh centuries. Both exhibit sensitivity to the environmental realities of the landscape of the Delta and of the wadis south of Thebes. Each settlement illustrates the importance of the built environment to not only fulfill the needs of the monastic community through the construction of specific features (east niches, built-in benches, reception halls, painted programs, private kitchens, etc.) and the need for protection and comfort, but also through the efforts by masons and architects to determine how to make dwellings and buildings that accommodated the natural environment. Together, these various features of the monastic built environment illustrate how monks were able to use the freedom to build new settlements in Late Antique Egypt to their advantage. As building codes and restrictions became more apparent in the late ninth and early tenth centuries, we can see the decline in monastic expansion and a greater effort at consolidation of communities. A telling indication that Egypt's monastic landscape was entirely different than that of the lay communities is the fact that very few settlements were remodeled or even damaged during the medieval period and later. Despite the substantial architecture, the soundness of the construction, and the locations, the settlements did not become a part of Egypt's historical landscape in subsequent generations. The settlements would fade from memory except for their toponyms as monasteries or *days*.¹³

BUILDING IN UNDERUTILIZED LANDSCAPES

Another way to observe how monastic built environments reflect the needs of Late Antique monastic communities is to look at the wide range of areas selected by monastics for development as monastic settlements. The locations are a crucial part of the large story of building Egypt's monastic landscape. Where monks built was in large part shaped by where they were free to build without restrictions from building codes or from nearby estate owners. The fact that monks elected to use underdeveloped areas and abandoned landscapes reflects the practicality and expediency driving the decision to move into unclaimed territory at a time when building policies were more lax and thus monks could create the settlements that suited their own needs.

A modern example of the relative ease of taking advantage of the existing features of the landscape will help illustrate this point. Numerous late



79. William Flinders Petrie outside of his tomb residence near Great Pyramid in Giza, c. 1881. He described this dwelling in his autobiography *Ten Years' In Egypt*. Notice the wood framing for the window and the entrance, which is closed by a wooden door.

nineteenth- and early twentieth-century reports by archaeologists recount their pleasure in converting abandoned tombs, quarries, and caves into suitable housing for their excavation seasons. William Flinders Petrie, for example, frequently resided in the rock-cut tombs near his excavation projects (see Fig. 79). The tombs provided the necessary shelter for sleeping, but also a convenient space for working during the hot summer months and cool winter evenings. Petrie explains why he turned to the convenience of an abandoned tomb, which had already received modifications from a prior occupant:

The first consideration on reaching Egypt was where to be housed. In those days [1880] there was no luxurious hotel close to the pyramids; if any one needed to live there, they must either live in a tomb or in the Arab village. As an English engineer had left a tomb fitted with a door and shutters I was glad to get such accommodation. When I say a tomb, it must be understood to be the upper chamber where the Egyptian fed his ancestors with offerings, and not the actual sepulcher. And I had three rooms, which had belonged to separate tombs originally; the thin walls of rock which the economical Egyptian left between his cuts, had been broken away, and so I had a doorway in the middle into my living-room, a window on one side for my bedroom, and another window opposite for

a store-room. I resided here for a great part of two-years; and often when in draughty houses, or chilly tents, I have wished myself back in my tomb. No place is so equable in heat and cold, as a room cut out in solid rock; it seems as good as a fire in cold weather, and deliciously cool in the heat.¹⁴

Petrie, like others, realized the inherent benefits of naturally existing shelter, whether it was in the form of a natural cave, a rock-cut tomb, or a quarry. The underutilized tomb offered Petrie convenience and also met, if not exceeded, his expectations for comfort and protection. His account, as a visitor to Egypt's landscape, reflects his acquired knowledge about why a tomb residence was far more appropriate than a tent, which was so commonly used by other expeditions. His whimsical longing for the regularity of temperature of his Egyptian tomb conveys the practicality for adopting rock-cut features as part of a settlement. The modifications that his predecessor made to the tomb were neither extensive nor onerous, as a trained stonemason could install framing for a window shutter and a door to close the dwelling. Similarly, we can look at monastic built environments to observe how Late Antique and early medieval builders adapted the already existing features of Egypt's underutilized landscape, especially with preexisting structures, to build settlements that ultimately served their needs for new settlements.

While observing the variations in monastic site selection is rather a straightforward approach to reading monastic built communities, finding a methodology to highlight Late Antique social memories about such spaces is far more complex, as I have illustrated through the discussion of the documentary and literary evidence. Anthropologist Paul Lane proposes a more nuanced approach to reading the transformed landscape and moving us beyond simple classification of reuse. He argues that when landscape is manipulated, it reflects the "ways in which social memory was constructed by people in the past from the physical remains that were visible to them in the landscape, or which they encountered in the earth."¹⁵ Lane encourages viewers of archaeological settlements to consider "the role of the past in the past" by identifying "what sites, monuments and physical objects were preserved and which were dismissed as having no historical value."¹⁶ By reading the archaeological record for signs of monastic approaches to the past, we can observe whether monastic communities settled in landscapes with historical value. While many studies of monasticism have commented on the monastic practice of "reclaiming" pharaonic tombs for Christian use, we learned from the Holy Topos of Apa Epiphanius that the "tomb" had become a "cave" and that perhaps its "historical value" was no longer seen in the same way as it was when travelers came to Egypt on the Grand Tour.

For early viewers of pharaonic monuments, the tangible signs of Christian construction in the form of churches, lay domestic quarters, and monastic settlements were a violation of the past. Mud brick architecture was considered



80. Coptic home in Dayr Abu Hinnis in Middle Egypt with the residents' religious identity carved onto wooden doors and painted on the exterior of the home.

to clutter the spaces, and thus much of the material would be removed to make a singular presentation of Egypt's pharaonic past without the presence of later habitation and adaptations made by later communities. The importance of transforming the Late Antique landscape through building and modification, such as the inscription of prayers and names, was one form of inscribing monastic identity onto spaces.¹⁷ Did these practices reflect efforts to lay claim to spaces, or were they simply acts of inscribing a community's identity to a space? How might we compare Late Antique acts of marking space and residency with the actions of a modern Christian resident in Dayr Abu Hinnis, who has purchased wooden doors carved with symbols of Christian faith and painted the exterior wall with a cross (see Fig. 80)? Would we be able to determine the faith of the resident if the doors were removed and the painting and plaster weathered away from the external surface?

Late Antique Coptic literature provided a framework for authors to recast Egypt's earlier pagan history as one that was of another time and place, but one facet of rewriting of Egypt's past was the way in which Christian authors "create[d] a new and specifically Christian mythology surrounding certain aspects of pagan culture."¹⁸ They adopted particular iconographic elements

of Egypt's visual culture for Christianization and sought to be engaged with the physicality of the past and not remove it entirely.¹⁹ In terms of material remains, late antique textiles for burials bear the symbols of Egypt's past, but are not necessarily imbued with the older notions of pagan belief for "[w]hereas Christian *belief* signaled a significant break with traditional worldviews, many aspects of normative *practice* were little changed."²⁰ While earlier scholars sought to create stark, chronological breaks with the advent of the monastic movement and then later the Arab conquest, archaeological evidence of monastic communities indicates the longevity of complex relationships with Egypt's past that negate the older paradigms of cultural fissures that scholars may wish to overlay onto the past. This severing of the connectivity between periods helped support a devaluing of monastic things, as they were regarded as being completely antithetical to the periods that preceded them.

Monastic built environments reflect an awareness of Egypt's earlier built environments through the construction of settlements in older landscapes such as necropoleis, quarries, and natural shelters along desert paths for mining or surveillance. For this reason, "archaeology has enormous potential to illustrate the operation and relative significance of different concepts and attitudes to time over the course of human history."²¹ In many ways, Christian and monastic authors aimed to create a dangerous landscape of the past, one that reflects the objectives of the generalized landscape that does not bear out when we examine the actual landscape of monastic communities. A convincing illustration of how monastic authors constructed a different language for discussing the landscape is illustrated in Elisabeth O'Connell's analysis of perceptions of the monastic residences built into the abandoned funerary landscape of Thebes. She explains how monastic residents in the adapted tombs did not "employ the usual language" for a tomb, but instead "had recourse to a technical, Egyptian vocabulary that reflected the topography of their monumental landscape."²² The fluidity of language to describe the monastic built environment is important as we proceed to look at the spaces that reflect monastic needs and desires for establishing new communities. O'Connell draws into sharper relief the difference between perceptions of the generalized, monastic landscape with the actual, inhabited landscape when she states that "funerary connotations of the space are implicit, but they are not exploited to the degree that we find (and expect) in the literary sources."²³ By looking at the monastic settlements at Saqqara and in Thebes, we can reconsider how monastic authors and later scholars wrote a history of monastic site formation that isolated monastic communities in ways that are at odds with the archaeological record.

By adopting the language monastics used to describe their built environments, which is embedded in a specific topography with mountains, valleys, and roads, we can better understand how they differentiated their constructions

within the landscape. For the monastic communities in the Theban necropolis, we observe that the language for habitation did not differ from the built environments in the hills of Naqlun or the mountain of Memphis. The older pharaonic landscape with its monumental structures and rock-cut features (tombs and quarries) was not seen as a landscape to be conquered and subdued – at least in the records of daily living, the landscape was not inhabited by demons, but rather by monks, students, physicians, bakers, tradesmen, parents, sailors, and people in need of guidance.

The Holy Topos of Epiphanius offers substantial evidence to illustrate how a few monastics built an environment that reflected their needs for workshop space, a retreat from the heat and cold of the desert, and the visibility to make the settlement recognizable from anywhere in the valley. They remodeled rock-cut tombs to provide comfort and protection for sleeping and work. They inserted loom pits into bedrock to create the necessary work areas for making the textiles that were apparently the craftsmanship the community came to be known for. Whether it was Epiphanius or someone like him, the monks selected a location in close proximity to several other monastic settlements. It was visible to their nearby neighbors such as the monks at the Topos of Phoibammon and the Dwelling Place of Frangé. Finally, the monks used the natural contours of the terrace at Apa Epiphanius to create the boundary wall, which was, as seen elsewhere, not a defensive wall, but rather establishing the visual limits of the site and offering protection from animals and other desert creatures. Together these features all demonstrate how monastic builders such as Epiphanius, Psan, and Jacob capitalized on underutilized landscape and transformed a set of tombs in an abandoned necropolis into a thriving community of craftsmen in leather and textiles.

MONASTIC MINDSCAPES, DESERTSCAPES, AND LANDSCAPES

The archaeology of monastic Egypt is rich and diverse with a rapidly growing body of new discoveries.²⁴ As scholarly interest in monasticism has increased, so has the related interest in finding monastic settlements. And still, the mythologized Desert Fathers cast a shadow over Egyptian monasticism that has been difficult to shake. Debates occur about whether Egyptian monks could own property, if they were involved in giving or receiving loans, and if they traveled as much as their letters suggest they did. The archaeological evidence of complex built environments, with parallels to many nonmonastic, domestic settlements, demonstrate how similar monastic settlements could be to the world they purportedly left behind when they joined the community. The outer desert or deserted land was not far away, and was visited frequently by those selling and buying goods at the *topos*, *manshōpe*, and *monastērion*. In some sites the interior spaces of monastic

dwellings were far more elaborate than any interior space found elsewhere in Late Antique Egypt, aside from the Red Monastery church in Sohag. What does it mean to enter a monastery and live in a space filled with color, images of saints, and fellow monastics, and embrace a life of asceticism?

Bjørnar Olsen challenges us to move beyond the history of thought, the mindscape of monasticism, to focus on the nonhuman elements of the past, the desertscape of Egypt. It requires a journey that begins in the nineteenth century when monastic material was first encountered and dismissed because it was made of mud brick, reflected a lifestyle that was scorned by others, and was deemed to be responsible for Egypt's decline from its noble past. This prejudicial view of the monastic past was built on a foundation of Late Antique monastic stories and hagiographies that focused not on what was actual, but on what was hoped for. The stories were intended to inspire the listeners and to give honor to those who had died.

It was only when looking at letters, contracts, and bills of sale that the generalized landscape begins to blur and a different landscape comes into sharp relief. In looking at documentary evidence and the built environment we face tangible evidence of the connective webs that drew monastic communities into relationships with the local churches, sailors, villagers, and city dwellers. The desertscape was not a landscape of isolation, but a land that was not previously inhabited and now it was settled, even urbanized, by monastic constructions. The monastic mindscape gives way to the actual desertscape that takes form as a unique Late Antique landscape shaped by a variety of movements, tasks, and materials that build a new picture of Egyptian monasticism.

NOTES

INTRODUCTION

- 1 Anonymous, "Letters from the East.—No. VII. Girge." *The New Monthly Magazine and Literary Journal* 1824: 244.
- 2 John Murray, *A handbook for travellers in Lower and Upper Egypt: including descriptions of the course of the Nile through Egypt and Nubia, Alexandria, Cairo, the Pyramids, Thebes, the first and second cataracts to Khartum, the Suez canal, the peninsula of Mount Sinai, the oases, the Fayyum* (London: J. Murray, 1888), 532.
- 3 Grossmann's work presents a geographical catalog, complete with plans, for most of the known churches found in Egypt. Peter Grossmann, *Christliche Architektur in Ägypten* (Leiden: Brill, 2002). Wipszycka's volume includes discussions of monastic papyrological and documentary evidence alongside archaeological site descriptions. Ewa Wipszycka, *Moines et communautés monastiques en Égypte* (Warsaw: Warsaw University, 2009).
- 4 Aziz S. Atiya, ed., *The Coptic Encyclopedia* (New York: Macmillan Publishing, 1991).
- 5 The *Coptic Encyclopedia* is now available in digital form and updated regularly since the 1991 publication of Atiya's volumes. See Karen J. Torjesen and Gawdat Gabra, eds., *Claremont Coptic Encyclopedia*, <http://ccdlibraries.claremont.edu/cdm/landingpage/collection/cce>.
- 6 An example of new scholarship is Jitse H. F. Dijkstra, *Philae and the End of Ancient Egyptian Religion. A Regional Study of Religious Transformation (298–642 CE)* (Leuven: Peeters, 2008). In this work, Dijkstra presents archaeological evidence for the Christianization of the First Cataract region by analyzing the transformation of a community through the epigraphic evidence and the sixth-century Coptic life of Aaron. His discussion is specific to the topic of one district, and as with previous studies, the literary and documentary evidence provides the foundation starting point for his analysis.
- 7 Olivier Delouise and Maria Mossakowska-Gaubert, eds., *La vie quotidienne des moines en Orient et en Occident (IVe–Xe siècle). L'état des sources* (Cairo: IFAO, 2015).
- 8 A preliminary bibliography for O'Connell's plenary session is available at www.copticcongress2016.org/OConnell_Archaeology_Handout_FINAL.pdf. A publication of the conference's proceedings is forthcoming from Peeters.
- 9 Goehring's seminal article in 2003 became the first critical assessment of the mythology of the Egyptian desert for creating monastic identity. James E. Goehring, "The Dark Side of Landscape: Ideology and Power in the Christian Myth of the Desert," *JMEMS* 33.3 (2003): 437–451.
- 10 Darlene L. Brooks Hedstrom, "Divine Architects: Designing the Monastic Dwelling Place," in *Egypt in the Byzantine World, 300–700*, ed. Roger Bagnall (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 368–389.
- 11 Darlene L. Brooks Hedstrom, Elizabeth S. Bolman, et al., "The White Monastery Federation Project: Survey and Mapping at the Monastery of Apa Shenoute (Dayr al-Anba Shinūda), Sohag, 2005–2007," *DOP* 65 (2013): 333–364; Peter Grossmann, Darlene Brooks Hedstrom, and Mohamad Abdal-Rassul with an appendix by Elizabeth S. Bolman, "The Excavation in the Monastery of Apa Shenoute (Dayr Anba Shinuda) at Suhag: Appendix on Documentary Photography at the Monasteries of Anba Shinuda and Anba Bishoi, Suhag," *DOP* 58 (2004): 371–382; idem, Darlene L. Brooks Hedstrom and Saad M. Mohamad Osman with Hans-Christian Noeske et al., "Second Report on the Excavation in the Monastery of Apa Shenoute (Dayr Anba Shinuda) at Suhag," *DOP* 63 (2009): 167–219.

- 12 Darlene L. Brooks Hedstrom, Stephen J. Davis, Tomasz Herbich, Salima Ikram, Dawn McCormack, Marie-Dominique Nenna, and Gillian Pyke, "New Archaeology at Ancient Sketis Surveys and Initial Excavations at the Monastery of St. John the Little in Wādī al-Natrūn," *DOP* 64 (2010): 1–11; Stephen J. Davis, Darlene L. Brooks Hedstrom, Tomasz Herbich, Gillian Pyke, and Dawn McCormack, "Yale Monastic Archaeology Project John the Little. Season 2 (May 14 – June 15, 2007)," *Mishkah* 3 (2008): 59–64; Stephen J. Davis with Elizabeth S. Bolman, Darlene L. Brooks Hedstrom, and Gillian Pyke, "Life and Death in Lower and Upper Egypt: A Brief Survey of Recent Monastic Archaeology at Yale," *JCS* 3 (2012): 9–26; Peter Grossmann, "On the Church in the So-Called Kôm of John the Little," *BSAC* 49 (2010): 17–24; idem, "On the So-Called Monastery of the Armenians in Wādī Natrūn (Ancient Sketis)," *BSAC* 51 (2012): 25–37; Karel C. Innemée, "Excavations at Deir al-Baramus 2002–2005," *BSAC* 44 (2005): 55–68.
- 13 Three oratories (*eukteria*) are mentioned explicitly in an early sixth-century document from Aphrodito (*SB* XX 14669). The oratories are not *within* a monastery or a church, but are listed separately from other monasteries and churches and therefore may reflect that these were private religious spaces, separate from the ecclesiastical and monastic foundations. Leslie S. B. MacCoull, "Monastic and Church Landholding in the Aphrodito Cadaster," *ZPE* 178 (2011): 243–246.
- 14 Timothy Mitchell, *Colonizing Egypt* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988).
- 15 For instance, Kim Bowes presents archaeological evidence from the Roman West to demonstrate that the material remains of Late Antique monasticism do not differ in substantive ways from the built environments of nonmonastic spaces. It is not until the eighth and ninth centuries that the physical evidence belies a "particulated 'monastic archaeology'" (344). Kim Bowes, "Inventing Ascetic Space: Houses, Monasteries and the 'Archaeology of Monasticism,'" in *Western Monasticism Ante Litteram: The Spaces of Monastic Observance in Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages*, ed. Hendrik Dey and Elizabeth Fentress (Turnhout: Brepols, 2011), 315–351; Roberta Gilchrist and Harold Mytum, eds, *Advances in Monastic*

Archaeology (Oxford: Tempus Reparatum, 1993). See also Darlene L. Brooks Hedstrom and Hendrik Dey, "The Archaeology of Early Monasticism," in *Cambridge History of Medieval Western Monasticism*, eds. Alison I. Beach and Isabelle Cochelin (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, in press).

1 MONASTIC ARCHAEOLOGY IN THE NINETEENTH AND EARLY TWENTIETH CENTURIES

- 1 Michael W. Hamma, "Lecture Tour of the Holy Land" [ca. 1890], Archives at Thomas Library, Wittenberg University, 4–6. I thank the staff at Thomas Library for permission to use the unpublished diary. Hamma used the diary later for a speaking series at his church at First Lutheran in Springfield, Ohio.
- 2 Hamma, *Lecture Tour of Holy Land*, 18.
- 3 The majority of opinions of the Anglo-Americans on the despair associated with the desert as a "useful" landscape appear throughout personal narratives and travel accounts of a variety of authors. The deserts of Egypt and the Middle East were not the only ones scorned; a similar attitude was held by American missionaries working in the frontier of the American West. For examples, see Darlene L. Brooks Hedstrom, "Treading on Antiquity: Anglo-American Missionaries and the Religious Landscape of Nineteenth-Century Coptic Egypt," *Material Religion* 8.2 (2012): 128–153.
- 4 Richard Parkinson and Whitfield Diffie, *Cracking Codes: The Rosetta Stone and Decipherment* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999); John Ray, *The Rosetta Stone and the Rebirth of Ancient Egypt* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2011).
- 5 Joseph Parrish Thompson, "Editorial Correspondence. Mr. Thompson's Letter on the Copts," *The Independent and the Weekly Review*, July 7, 1853; 5, 240, 1.
- 6 R. P. Michel Jullien, *Voyage dans le désert de la Basse-Thébaïde (Aux couvents de St-Antoine & St-Paul)* (Lyon: Missions Catholiques, 1884).
- 7 Eugene Vetromile, *Travels in Europe, Egypt, Arabia Petraea, Palestine and Syria* (New York: D. J. Sadlier & Co., 1871), 13.
- 8 Vetromile, 14.
- 9 Ibid., 113.

- 10 Ibid., 72. In describing Coptic priests he writes: “They are ignorant, and few of the clergy comprehend the language in which their liturgy is written. They are described to be of such loose morals and discipline that their religion is a by-word among the heathen” (88).
- 11 For two recent assessments of missionary activity in Egypt see Paul Sedra, *From Mission to Modernity: Evangelicals, Reformers and Education in Nineteenth Century Egypt* (New York: I.B. Tauris, 2011) and Heather J. Sharkey, *American Evangelicals in Egypt: Missionary Encounters in an Age of Empire* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2008).
- 12 Active Catholic missions, such as the Irish African Mission Society to Egypt, sought to revitalize what they considered to be an original Catholic Christian Egypt. Writing in 1919, Rev. D. J. O’Sullivan explained the motivation for Catholic missions: “Fifteen centuries ago Egypt ranked as high among the Christian nations as Ireland does today. The Egyptians of those early times were profoundly and intensely Catholic ... For forty-two years our Society has been striving for the regeneration of Egypt ... Large numbers of schismatics, Copt. (sic) and Greek, have been educated out of the fierce religious hostility which had been handed down to them and trained from their earliest years in the ways of Christian charity. Many of them have come back to the old faith of their fathers, and some of those converts are to be found today among the saintliest priests of the African Mission Society.” D. J. O’Sullivan, *The Land of the Pyramids and “The White Man’s Grave”* (St. Paul, MN: J. A. Welch Co., 1919), 12, 17. The *Catholic World* presented vignettes of successful Catholic missions in the Middle East.
- 13 Andrew Watson, *The American Mission in Egypt* (Pittsburgh, PA: United Presbyterian Board of Publication, 1898), 56. A recent autobiographical history of the American Presbyterian mission in Egypt is Jack Lorimer, *The Presbyterian Experience in Egypt 1950–2000* (Denver, CO: Outskirts Press, 2007). Earlier histories of the American Presbyterian mission include Earl E. Elder, *Vindicating a Vision: The Story of the American Mission in Egypt 1854–1954* (Pittsburgh, PA: Board of Foreign Missions of the United Presbyterian Church of N. A., 1958).
- 14 Rena L. Hogg, *A Mastery-Builder on the Nile: Being a Record of the Life and Aims of John Hogg, D. D.* (Pittsburgh, PA: United Presbyterian Board of Publication, [1914]), 95. Hogg followed earlier Presbyterian missionaries including the McCagues, James Barnett, and Gulian and Sarah Lansing.
- 15 Ussama Makdisi, *Artillery of Heaven: American Missionaries and the Failed Conversion of the Middle East* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2007); Brian Vandemark, *American Sheiks: Two Families, Four Generations, and The Story of America’s Influence in the Middle East* (Amherst, NY: Prometheus Books, 2012).
- 16 Charles Watson, *Egypt and the Christian Crusade* (Philadelphia: Board of Foreign Missions of the United Presbyterian Church of N. A., 1907), 107.
- 17 Lisa Colletta, ed., *The Legacy of the Grant Tour: New Essays on Travel, Literature, and Culture* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2015); Allison Douglas Boutros, *The Soul of Egypt: The Charm and Needs of the Land of the Nile* (London: Marshall, Morgan and Scott, 1936); Robert De Rustafjaell, *The Light of Egypt* (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner & Co., 1909).
- 18 In addition to the expected devaluation of the monastic world with feminized and anti-Orthodox/anti-Catholic rhetoric, there are examples of encounters with monasticism that were positive; however, these did not evolve into plans for heritage management or presentation of Coptic monuments. Brooks Hedstrom, “Treading on Antiquity,” 146–149.
- 19 Peter F. Dorman and Betsy M. Bryan, eds., *Sacred Space and Sacred Function in Ancient Thebes* (Chicago: Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago, 2007); K. Vandorpe, “City of Many a Gate, Harbour for Many a Rebel: Historical and Topographical Outline of Greco-Roman Thebes,” in *Hundred-Gated Thebes: Acts of a Colloquium on Thebes and the Theban Area in the Graeco-Roman Period*, ed. S. Vleeming (Leiden, the Netherlands: Brill, 1995), 203–239.
- 20 *Little’s Living Age*, 8:94 (28 February 1846): 400.
- 21 Elisabeth O’Connell, “The Discovery of Christian Egypt: From Manuscript Hunters toward an Archaeology of Late Antique Egypt,” in *Coptic Civilization: Two Thousand Years of Christianity in Egypt*, ed. Gawdat Gabra (Cairo: AUC Press, 2014), 163–176.
- 22 [Eliza] Platt, *Journal of a Tour through Egypt, the Peninsula of Sinai and the Holy Land, in 1838*, 1839, 2 vols. (London: Richard Watts, 1841).

- 23 Platt, *Tour through Egypt*, 180.
- 24 Ibid.
- 25 Ibid.
- 26 Jacek Kościuk, "Late Roman Housing in the Area of Luxor Temple," in *Non Solum Villae*, ed. Jack Kościuk and Stanislaw Medeksza (Wrocław, Poland: Oficyna Wydawn, 2010), 183–209.
- 27 Joseph Moyle Sherer, *The Imagery of Foreign Travel* (London: Longman, 1838), 165–166.
- 28 Earl Baldwin Smith, *Early Christian Iconography and a School of Ivory Carvers in Provence* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1918), 169.
- 29 Ibid.
- 30 Amelia Edwards, *A Thousand Miles up the Nile* (London: Longmans, 1877); Joan Rees, *Amelia Edwards: Traveller, Novelist & Egyptologist* (London: Rubicon Press, 1998); Brenda Moon, *More Usefully Employed: Amelia B. Edwards, Writer, Traveller and Campaigner for Ancient Egypt* (London: Egypt Exploration Society, 2006).
- 31 Moon, *Amelia Edwards*, 135–146.
- 32 Edwards, *Thousand Miles*, 79.
- 33 Several travel guides commented on this community, including Jonathan Mayhew Wainwright, *The Land of Bondage* (New York: D. Appleton & Company, 1852), 89.
- 34 Arthur Weigall, *Travels in the Upper Egyptian Deserts* (London: William Blackwood and Sons, 1909); idem, *A Guide to the Antiquities of Upper Egypt* (London: Methuen & Co., 1910); E. A. Wallis Budge, *The Nile: Notes for Travellers in Egypt* (London: T. Cook & Son, 1890).
- 35 Waleed Hazbun, "The East as an Exhibit: Thomas Cook & Son and the Origins of the International Tourism Industry in Egypt," in *The Business of Tourism: Place, Faith, and History*, ed. Philip Scranton and Janet F. Davidson (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2007), 3–33.
- 36 Arthur Weigall, *Wanderings in Roman Britain* (London: T. Butterworth, 1926), 13.
- 37 Weigall, *Roman Britain*, 13.
- 38 Carl Richard Lepsius, *Letters from Egypt, Ethiopia, and the Peninsula of Sinai* (London: H. G. Bohn, 1853), 268.
- 39 Margaret S. Drower, *Flinders Petrie: A Life in Archaeology* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1995); Debbie Challis, *The Archaeology of Race: The Eugenic Ideas of Francis Galton and Flinders Petrie* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2013); Stephen Quirke, *Hidden Hands: Egyptian Workforces in Petrie Excavation Archives 1880–1924* (London: Duckworth, 2010).
- 40 William M. Flinders Petrie, *Athribis*, vol. 14 (London: British School of Archaeology in Egypt, 1908), 13.
- 41 Paul Sedra, "Imagining an Imperial Race: Egyptology in the Service of Empire," *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa, and the Middle East* 24.1 (2004): 253.
- 42 William M. Flinders Petrie, *The Revolutions of Civilization* (London: Harper & Brothers, 1911), 37.
- 43 Hans A. Winkler, *Rock Drawings of Southern Upper Egypt*, vol. 2 (London: Egypt Exploration Society/Archaeological Survey of Egypt, 1938), 15.
- 44 Ibid.
- 45 Ibid.
- 46 Ibid.
- 47 Ibid.
- 48 Edward Gibbon, *The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, 6th ed. (Philadelphia: B. F. French, 1830), 37.1.73.
- 49 Brooks Hedstrom, "Treading on Antiquity," 132–138.
- 50 Philip Schaff, *Through Bible Lands* (New York: American Tract Society, 1878), 124–125.
- 51 For the *Sayings of the Desert Fathers* (*Apophthegmata Patrum*), see Benedicta Ward, trans., *The Sayings of the Desert Fathers: The Alphabetical Collection* (Kalamazoo, MI: Cistercian Publications, 1975). For the hagiographies of the first Desert Fathers, see *Early Christian Biographies*, trans. Roy J. Deferrari (New York: Fathers of the Church, 1952). For a more scholarly introduction to the material, see suggested readings in William Harmless, *Desert Christians: An Introduction to the Literature of Early Monasticism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004).
- 52 Schaff, *Through Bible Lands*, 123.
- 53 Ibid.
- 54 Ibid., 124.
- 55 Ibid.
- 56 Ibid.
- 57 Sherer, *Imagery of Foreign Travel*, 167.
- 58 The need to convert pagan spaces to Christian areas of worship appears as a theme in Egyptian monastic descriptions of how temples were Christianized. For a discussion, see David Frankfurter, "Iconoclasm and Christianization in Late Antique Egypt: Christian Treatments of Space and Image," in *From Temple to Church: Destruction and Renewal of Local Cultic*

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- 59 Michael Decker, *The Byzantine Dark Ages* (London: Bloomsbury, 2016), 34. "In many of its interests and tenets, Byzantine archaeology has changed little since 1950. Byzantine archaeology does not exist at all as a field or discipline if the criteria as such depend upon an internally recognized centre of funding, support, and scholarly interaction, or the publication of a marquee journal."
- 60 *Ibid.*, 31.
- 61 *Ibid.*, 31–32.
- 62 O'Connell, "The Discovery of Christian Egypt," 163–176.
- 63 For an introduction to Grendell and Hunt's excavations at Oxyrhynchus and their methodology, see Alan K. Bowman et al., ed., *Oxyrhynchus: A City and Its Texts* (London: Published for the Arts and Humanities Research Council by the Egypt Exploration Society, 2007); Peter Parsons, *City of the Sharp-Nosed Fish: Greek Lives in Roman Egypt* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 2007), 12–30; A. Alcock, "Two Coptic Letters from Oxyrhynchus," *Orientalia* 62 (1993): 83–88.
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- 68 Nicholas Warner, "An Architect Abroad: The Life and Work of Somers Clarke in Egypt," *MDAIK* 68 (2014): 237–261; *idem*, "Somers Clarke: A Pioneer of Mud Brick Architecture in Egypt," in *Hassan Fathy: Une ambition Égyptienne*, ed. Serge Santelli (Cairo: Institut Français d'Égypte 2011), 1–11.
- 69 Somers Clarke, *Christian Antiquities in the Nile Valley: A Contribution towards the Study of the Ancient Churches* (London: Clarendon Press, 1912), 7, 15.
- 70 For a biography of Simaika and history of the creation of the Coptic Museum, see Donald Reid, *Whose Pharaohs? Archaeology, Museums, and Egyptian National Identity from Napoleon to World War I* (Cairo: The American University in Cairo Press, 2002), 258–286; O'Connell, "The Discovery of Christian Egypt," 172; Gawdat Gabra, *Treasures from the Coptic Museum* (Cairo: The American University in Cairo Press, 2006).
- 71 Dominique Bénazeth, "Un monastère dispersé: Les antiquités de Baouît conservées dans les musées d'Égypte," *BIFAO* 97 (1997): 43–66.
- 72 Clédât outlines his visit and his initial hypothesis that he had found a necropolis for monks. See Jean Clédât, "Recherches sur le Kôm de Baouît," *CRAI* 46.5 (1902): 525–546.
- 73 The gatherers of the *sebakhi* are known as the *sebakhin*, and they often inadvertently discovered new ruins of settlements, as their primary goal was the extraction of the fertilizer and not antiquities. Since the work of the *sebakhin* happened when foreign archaeologists were away from excavations, the activities of the *sebakhin* were used to illustrate the need for foreign expeditions to continue excavation work at site. Nineteenth- and early twentieth-century publication reports often blamed the *sebakhin* for "destroying" or "damaging" sites in their search for fertilizer. The line between "illegal digging," as it often appears in excavation reports, and the collection of easily accessible fertilizer is difficult to draw, as the distinction involves identifying whose cultural heritage is at risk. See Willeke Wendrich, "Archaeology and Sustainable Tourism in Egypt: Protecting Community, Antiquities, and Environment," in *Of the Past, for the Future: Integrating Archaeology and Conservation*, eds. Neville Agnew and Janet Bridgland (Los Angeles: The J. Paul Getty Trust, 2006), 184–190; Peter Hessler, "Letter from Abydos, 'The Buried,'" *The New Yorker*, November 18 (2013): 52–62.
- 74 Jean Clédât, "Notes archéologiques et philologiques," *BIFAO* 1 (1901): 90–91.
- 75 Cédric Meurice, *Jean Clédât en Égypte et en Nubie (1900–1914)* (Cairo: IFAO, 2014).

- 76 Palanque's 1903 campaign in January and February was a salvage operation in which he documented the discoveries uncovered by the local fertilizer company, which was granted permission to work at the site for *sébakh*. Charles Palanque, "Rapport sur les recherches effectuées à Baouît en 1903," *BIFAO* 5 (1906): 1–21. The publication did not include a map of the work, but it did include relative distances between the work and some buildings excavated by Clédât in the prior two seasons.
- 77 Jean Clédât, "Nouvelles recherches à Baouît (Haute Egypte). Campagnes 1903–04," *CRAI* 48.5 (1904): 517–526. For a list of publications before 1995, see Marie-Hélène Rutschowskaya, "Le monastère de Baouît – État des publications," in *Divitiae Aegypti: Koptologische und verwandte Studien zu Ehren von Martin Krause*, eds. Cäcilia Fluck, Lucia Langener, Siegfried Richter, Sofia Schaten, and Gregor Würst (Wiesbaden: Dr. Ludwig Richert Verlag, 1995), 279–288.
- 78 Jean Clédât, "Baouît," *Dictionnaire d'Archéologie chrétienne et de liturgie* 2.1 (1910): 203–205.
- 79 Palanque, "Rapport sur les recherches effectuées à Baouît en 1903," 1.
- 80 Jean Maspero, "Rapport de M. Jean Maspero sur les fouilles entreprises à Baouît," *Comptes rendus des séances de l'Académie des inscriptions et belles-lettres* 43 (1913): 287–301.
- 81 Dominique Bénazeth, "Histoire des fouilles de Baouît," *Études Coptes* IV (1994): 53–62.
- 82 Bénazeth, *Historie des fouilles*, 60. Based on the documentary ostraca and papyri, only male monastics are referenced in the material. If women were present at Dayr Apa Apollo, they are not attested in these materials. Chapter 2 addresses the archaeology of female communities.
- 83 See Drioton's introductory remarks in *MIFAO* LIX, i–iii and Reid, *Whose Pharaohs?*, 270.
- 84 The excavation monographs detailing the work at Baouît were published in the *Mémoire de l'Institut français d'archéologie orientale*, or *MIFAO*. Jean Clédât, *Le Monastère et la nécropole de Baouît*, *MIFAO* 12, 1 and 2 (Cairo: IFAO, 1904–1906); Émile Chassinat, *Fouilles à Bouît*, *MIFAO* 13 (Cairo: IFAO, 1911); Jean Clédât, *Le Monastère et la nécropole de Baouît*, *MIFAO* 39 (Cairo: IFAO, 1916); Jean Maspero and Etienne Drioton, ed., *Fouilles exécutées à Baouît*, *MIFAO* 59, 1 and 2 (Cairo: IFAO, 1931–1943); Jean Clédât, *Le Monastère et la nécropole de Baouît*, ed. D. Bénazeth and M.-H. Rutschowskaya, *MIFAO* 111 (Cairo: IFAO, 1999). Hereafter citations will follow as identification of feature with citation *MIFAO*, Roman numeral, part, inscription number or figure (if used), and page (e.g., Chapel XVIII. *MIFAO*, XII.2. No. 8, 96).
- 85 See *MIFAO* 111.
- 86 Gaston Maspero, "Note sur les objets recueillis sous la pyramide de Ounas," *ASAE* 3 (1902): 186.
- 87 Ibid.
- 88 James E. Quibell, *Excavations at Saqqara*, II–IV (Cairo: IFAO, 1908–1912). *CE*, 773–774; Wipszycka, *Moines et communautés*, 126–128.
- 89 Quibell, *Excavations at Saqqara*, II, ii.
- 90 Quibell, *Excavations at Saqqara*, II, ii.
- 91 Gertrude Bell Archive, <http://gertrudebell.ncl.ac.uk>.
- 92 John of Nikiou wrote during the seventh century after the Arab conquest of Egypt. Robert Henry Charles, trans., *The Chronicle of John, Coptic Bishop of Nikiou* (London: Text and Translation Society, 1916).
- 93 John of Nikiou, *Chronicle* 89:4–14. Tim Vivian points out that the passage clearly states that Jeremias is "of Alexandria," and while one may read this to reflect his city of origin, it is equally likely that the monk Anastasius was not located at Memphis. Tim Vivian, "Ama Sibylla of Saqqara: Prioress or Prophet, Monastic or Mythological Being?" *Bulletin of the Saint Shenouda the Archimandrite Coptic Society* 5 (1998–1999): 1–17; repr. idem, *Words to Live By: Journeys in Ancient and Modern Monasticism* (Kalamazoo, MI: Cistercian Publications, 2005), 377–393.
- 94 Quibell, *Excavations at Saqqara*, IV, i.
- 95 Quibell, *Excavations at Saqqara*, IV, ii.
- 96 Quibell, *Excavations at Saqqara*, IV, i.
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- 99 Ibid.
- 100 Ibid., vi.
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- 103 Quibell, *Excavations at Saqqara*, III, 2.
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- 105 Wojciech Kolataj, Grzegorz Majcherek, and Ewa Paradowska, *Villa of the Birds: The Excavation and Reservation of the Kom al-Dikka Mosaics* (Cairo: American University in Cairo Press, 2007).
- 106 Quibell, *Excavations at Saqqara*, III, 6.
- 107 Maya Jasanoff, *Edge of Empire: Lives, Culture, and Conquest in the East 1750–1850* (New York: Vintage, 2005), 291–293.
- 108 *P.Mon.Epiph.* 585.
- 109 Herbert E. Winlock and Walter E. Crum, *The Monastery of Epiphanius*, 2 vols. (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1926; rpr. 1973), I:25.
- 110 Norman de Garis Davies, *Five Theban Tombs (Being Those of Mentuherkhepeshef, User, Daga, Nehemawäy and Tāti)* (London: Egypt Exploration Fund, 1913), 28.
- 111 Gaston Maspero, “Trois années de fouilles dans les tombeaux de Thèbes et de Memphis,” *Mémoires publiés par les membres de la Mission archéologique française au Caire* 1 (1884): 133–242.
- 112 Urbain Bouriant, “L’Église copte du tombeau de Dêga,” *Mémoires publiés par les membres de la Mission archéologique française au Caire* 1 (1884): 33–50. Bouriant gave a sketch of the interior of the tomb that was later used by the Metropolitan Museum of Art in their plans for the area.
- 113 *Ibid.*, 36–50.
- 114 *Ibid.*, 36. Winlock and Crum also describe how additional ostraca was purchased on the antiquities market and became part of the Coptic collection at the British Museum. Winlock and Crum, *Epiphanius* I: 26, no. 6.
- 115 Winlock and Crum, *Epiphanius*, I:26.
- 116 *Ibid.*
- 117 Davies, *Five Theban Tombs*, 28.
- 118 Winlock and Crum, *Epiphanius* I:xxi.
- 119 Davies, *Five Theban Tombs*, 28. Throughout his discussion, Davies mentions the removal of material by “the Copts” and of material from later periods. However, he states quite clearly he will not discuss the material as it is the realm of Winlock’s work.
- 120 Preliminary reports on the 1912 and 1914 seasons are H. E. Winlock, “The Work of the Egyptian Expedition,” *The Metropolitan Museum of Art Bulletin* 7.10 (1912): 184–190; *idem*, “The Egyptian Expedition: The Monastery of Epiphanius at Thebes,” *The Metropolitan Museum of Art Bulletin* 10.7 (1915): 138–150.
- 121 Winlock, “The Work of the Egyptian Expedition,” 189.
- 122 Walter E. Crum, “Hugh Evelyn-White (A Memoir),” *JEA* 10 (1924): 331–332. Evelyn White’s interest in Coptic material would increase further as he was appointed by the MMA to publish the photographs of an earlier 1916 expedition by W. J. Palmer-Jones to Wadi al-Natrun. He wanted more context for the photographs, and thus his intellectual curiosity fostered a thorough architectural and historical inquiry in Wadi al-Natrun in 1920–1921 on behalf of the MMA’s Egypt Expedition. His comprehensive, three-volume publication, *The Monasteries of Wadi ‘n Natrun*, became a benchmark in the historiography of monasticism in Egypt. He died in 1924, and colleagues from the Egyptian Department at the MMA published the results of his research in 1926, 1932, and 1933.
- 123 Winlock and Crum, *Epiphanius* I:i.
- 124 Christopher Entwistle, “O. M. Dalton: Ploughing the Byzantine Furrow,” in *Through the Looking Glass: Byzantium through British Eyes*, eds. Robin Cormack and Elizabeth Jeffreys (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2000), 177–183.
- 125 Averil Cameron, *Byzantine Matters* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2014), 70.
- 126 O. M. Dalton, *Byzantine Art and Archaeology* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1911), 71–72, 74.
- 127 Dalton references the discoveries at Bawit twenty-four times and those from Saqqara eighteen times. O’Connell reconstructs the roots of Dalton and the Fund’s interest in Egyptian excavation as a response to the aggressive resistance to new acquisition of Coptic material by E. A. Wallis Budge, the keeper in the Department of Egyptian and Assyrian Antiquities. His opposition seems to have stemmed from the fact that he resented the efforts by the Byzantinists to work independently of the Egyptian division. O’Connell, “R. Campbell Thompson’s 1913/14 Excavation at Wadi Sarga,” 125–126.
- 128 O’Connell, “R. Campbell Thompson’s 1913/14 Excavation at Wadi Sarga,” 126, no. 5.
- 129 *Ibid.*
- 130 M. Jullien, “Quelques anciens couvents de l’Égypte IV,” *Les Missions Catholiques* 35 (1903): 239–240.
- 131 William Flinders Petrie, *Gizeh and Rifeh* (London: British School of Archaeology in Egypt, 1907), 2.

- 132 Ibid.
- 133 Ibid.
- 134 Ibid.
- 135 Ibid.
- 136 Ibid.
- 137 During the 1906/1907 season, Petrie reports that his colleagues Rhoades, Ernest Mackay, and Gregg excavated at Dayr al Balayza, which was 13 kilometers to the north; however, no description of the work has been provided, except to state that the material dates from the seventh to the tenth century and the site was “largely excavated” by them. Petrie, *Gizeh and Rifeh*, 2.
- 138 O’Connell, “R. Campbell Thompson’s 1913/14 Excavation,” 121–192. A more extensive publication is under way, sponsored by the British Museum, under the project direction of O’Connell. “Wadi Sarga at the British Museum,” www.britishmuseum.org/research/research_projects/all_current_projects/wadi_sarga.aspx.
- 139 Ibid., 134.
- 140 R. Campbell Thompson, “Byzantine Research Fund: Excavations at Wadi Sarga,” *JEA* 1 (1914): 187–188; idem, “The Excavations at Wadi Sarga,” 1–5.
- 141 W. E. Crum, “The Monastic Settlement and Its Inhabitants,” in *Wadi Sarga, Coptic and Greek Texts*, 6–13.
- 142 Lyle Humphrey, “Collecting Christianity on the Nile: J. Pierpont Morgan and the Metropolitan Museum of Art,” in *Age of Transition: Byzantine Culture in the Islamic World*, ed. Helen Evans (New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2015), 2–19.
- 143 Gertrude Bell, “Letter,” 1/29/1909. Gertrude Bell Archive. Newcastle University. www.gerty.ncl.ac.uk/letter_details.php?letter_id=1643.
- 2 ARCHAEOLOGY AND
TWENTIETH-CENTURY
PERCEPTIONS OF THE MONASTIC
LANDSCAPE
- 1 Kostis Kourelis, “Byzantium and the Avant-Garde: Excavations at Corinth, 1920s–1930s,” *Hesperia* 76.2 (2007): 391–442.
- 2 For Karanis, see Terry G. Wilfong and Andrew W. F. Ferrara, eds., *Karanis Revealed: Discovering the Past and Present of a Michigan Excavation in Egypt* (Ann Arbor, MI: Kelsey Museum of Archaeology, 2014). For Abu Mena, see Carl M. Kaufmann, *Die Ausgrabung der Menas-Heiligtümer in der Mareotiswüste*, vols. 1–3 (Cairo: Finck & Baylaender, 1906–1908). For Fustāt, see Aly Bahgat and Albert Gabriel, *Fouilles d’al Foustāt* (Paris: E. de Boccard, 1921).
- 3 Colla, *Conflicted Antiquities*, 11–15. He also mentions a fourth narrative related to the contemporary role of modern scholars as individuals shaped by this earlier scholarship. Now as we enter the age of theorized archaeological work, by which archaeologists question the position of the excavator as a consumer of artifacts and knowledge, the fourth narrative is a constructionist model that draws on post-colonial theory to question the “very structures and methods of the most professional and competent archaeological science” as the methods of modern archaeologists “contain their own kind of politics” (14–15).
- 4 Ibid., 11–12.
- 5 Efraim Barak, “Egyptian Intellectuals in the Shadow of British Occupation,” *BJMES* 35.2 (2008): 173–186.
- 6 Ibid., 13–14.
- 7 Ibid., 14.
- 8 Reid, *Whose Pharaohs*, 15; idem, *Contesting Antiquity in Egypt: Archaeologies, Museums & the Struggle for Identities from World War I to Nasser* (Cairo: The American University in Cairo Press, 2015), 204–212.
- 9 James F. Goode, *Negotiating for the Past: Archaeology, Nationalism, and Diplomacy in the Middle East, 1919–1941* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2007), 82–85.
- 10 See Marvin W. Meyer, *The Gnostic Discoveries: The Impact of the Nag Hammadi Library* (New York: HarperCollins, 2009); James Robinson, *The Nag Hammadi Story from the Discovery to the Publication* (Leiden: Brill, 2014), 1101–1112.
- 11 Cameron, *Byzantine Matters*, 6.
- 12 Since the 1990s, numerous agencies have sponsored projects dedicated to specifically Coptic Christian monuments and archaeology. I address current projects in subsequent chapters as they relate to the earlier projects I analyze in what follows.
- 13 Bruce G. Trigger, “Expanding Middle-Range Theory,” *Antiquity* 69.264 (1995): 449–458; Stephen L. Dyson, “From New to New Age Archaeology: Archaeological Theory and

- Classical Archaeology – A 1990s Perspective,” *AJA* 97.2 (1993): 195–206; Marcia-Anne Dobres and John Robb, eds. *Agency in Archaeology* (New York: Routledge, 2000).
- 14 R. Campbell Thompson, “The Excavations at Wadi Sarga,” in *Wadi Sarga*, 1–5.
 - 15 Hugh G. Evelyn White, *The Monasteries of the Wādi ‘n Natrūn: Part II The History of the Monasteries of Nitria and of Scetis*, ed. Walter Hauser (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1932), vii–ix.
 - 16 Walter Hauser, “Prefatory Note,” in *Wādi ‘n Natrūn*, II, vii–viii.
 - 17 Hugh Evelyn White, *Wādi ‘n Natrūn* III, 5.
 - 18 *Ibid.*
 - 19 Evelyn White, *Wādi ‘n Natrūn* I, 7 and 52. Peter Grossmann, “Early Christian Architecture in the Nile Valley,” in *Coptic Art and Culture*, ed. by H. Hondelink (Cairo: Shouhdy Publishing House, 1990), 3–18; *idem*, “Early Christian Architecture in the Nile Valley,” in *Beyond the Pharaohs: Egypt and the Copts in the Second to Seventh Centuries A.D.*, ed. by Florence D. Friedman (Providence: Museum of Art & Rhode Island School of Design, 1989), 81–88.
 - 20 Evelyn White, *Wādi ‘n Natrūn* III, 6.
 - 21 *Ibid.*, 7.
 - 22 *Ibid.*, 8.
 - 23 *Ibid.*, 8. A discussion of the enclosure walls of the ninth century and subsequently redesigned to resemble the walls that are seen today is H. Torp, “Murs d’enceinte des monastères coptes primitifs et couvents-forteresses,” *Mélanges d’archéologie et d’histoire* 76.1 (1964): 173–200. Torp does not believe that walls enclosed the settlements at Sketis, since they were already living in semiprotected dwelling places that differed considerably from the monastic sites of Saqqara and Bawit.
 - 24 Parts of this discussion appeared in Darlene L. Brooks Hedstrom, “‘Your Cell Will Teach You All Things’: The Relationship between Monastic Practice and the Architectural Design of the Cell in Coptic Monasticism, 400–1000” (Ph.D. diss., Miami University, 2001), 165–169.
 - 25 Evelyn White, *Wādi ‘n Natrūn* III, 172.
 - 26 *Ibid.*, III, 50–51.
 - 27 *Ibid.*, III, 51, no. 2.
 - 28 Kenneth Conant, Review of Hugh G. Evelyn White, *The Monasteries of the Wādi ‘n Natrūn, Part II: The History of the Monasteries of Nitria and of Scetis*, ed. Walter Hauser (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1933). *AJA* 39.4 (1935): 638–639.
 - 29 The idea of early monasticism in the fourth century already had proponents in the early twentieth century. M. Jullien, “Quelques anciens couvents de l’Égypte IV,” *Les Missions Catholiques* 35 (1903): 239–240.
 - 30 F. Ll. Griffith, review Hugh G. Evelyn White, *The Monasteries of the Wādi ‘n Natrūn, Part II: The History of the Monasteries of Nitria and of Scetis*, ed. Walter Hauser (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1933). *JEA* 20.1/2 (1934): 117.
 - 31 Donald Reid, “Archaeology, social reform and modern identity among the Copts (1854–1952),” in *Entre réforme sociale et mouvement national: identité et modernisation en Égypte (1882–1962)*, ed. Alain Roussillon (Cairo: CEDEJ, 1995), 311–335.
 - 32 “Short History of the Society of Coptic Archaeology,” *BSAC* 26 (1984): 109–116.
 - 33 Leslie MacCoull, “Preface,” in *Studies in the Christian East in Memory of Mirrit Boutros Ghali* (Washington, DC: Society for Coptic Archaeology, 1995), i. The SAC would later publish a *Bulletin*, and this continues to be a journal with articles on Coptic art, history, and archaeology, although circulation of the journal is relatively small and the bulletin is not consulted much by scholars outside of Egypt.
 - 34 Charles Bachatly, “Thèbes: Le monastère de Phoibammon,” *CdE* 25 (1950): 167–169; *idem*, “Encriers coptes dans le monastère de Phoibammon près de Louxor,” *BSAC* 13 (1951): 33–35; *idem*, *Le Monastère de Phoebammon dans la Thébaïde*. 3 vols. (Cairo: Société d’Archéologie Copte, 1961–1981).
 - 35 Even the Society’s journal, the *BSAC*, did not publish between 1950 and 1957. Mirrit Boutros Ghali, “Obituary of Charles Bachatly,” *BSAC* 14 (1950–1957): 249–251; Antoine Khater, “Bibliographie de Charles Bachatly,” *BSAC* 15 (1950–1957): 227–228.
 - 36 Martin Krause, “Zwei Phoibammon-Klöster in Theben-West,” *MDAIK* 37 (1981): 262–263.
 - 37 Coptic *niri*. Greek: *kellia*.
 - 38 Evelyn White, *Wādi ‘n Natrūn* II: 17–24.
 - 39 *Ibid.*, II: 26.
 - 40 Omar Toussoun, “Une expédition de reconnaissance dans le désert libyque,” *CdE* 15 (1933): 106–107; *idem*, “Cellia” et ses couvents. *Notes sur le Désert Lybique* (Alexandria: Société royale d’archéologie d’Alexandrie, 1935).

- 41 Omar Toussoun, *Étude sur le Wadi Natroun, ses moines et ses couvents* (Alexandria: Société de publications égyptiennes, 1931).
- 42 A. F. C. de Cousson, "The Desert City of El Muna," *BSAA* 31 (1937): 247–253.
- 43 Jacques Jarry, "Description des restes d'un petit monastère coupe en deux par un canal d'irrigation aux Kellia," *BIFAO* 66 (1968): 147–155.
- 44 G. Andreu, G. Castel, and R.-G. Coquin, "Septième campagne de fouilles aux Kellia (avril 1981) Rapport préliminaire," *BIFAO* 81 (1981): 159–188; idem, G. Castel, and R.-G. Coquin, "Sixième campagne de fouilles aux Kellia 1979–1980. Rapport préliminaire," *BIFAO* 80 (1980): 347–368.
- 45 The first survey of the two areas was conducted by the MSAC: see P. Bridel et al., eds., *Explorations aux Qouçour Hégeila et Éreima lors des campagnes 1987, 1988 et 1989. EK 8184*, vol. 4 (Louvain: Peeters, 2003). In 2006 the *Egyptian Delta Monastic Archaeology Project* at Yale University conducted a magnetometric survey at Pherme. The executive director for *EDMAP*, now the *Yale Monastic Archaeology Project-North (YMAP-North)*, is Stephen J. Davis. See Tomasz Herbich, Darlene L. Brooks Hedstrom, and Stephen J. Davis, "A Geophysical Survey of Ancient Pherme: Magnetic Prospection at an Early Christian Monastic Site in the Egyptian Delta," *JARCE* 44 (2007): 129–137; "YMAP: Kellia and Pherme," egyptology.yale.edu/expeditions/current-expeditions/yale-monastic-archaeology-project-north-wadi-al-natrun/kellia-and-pherme.
- 46 Rodolphe Kasser, et al., *Kellia 1965 I. Topographie générale, mensurations et fouilles aux Qouçour 'Isa et aux Qouçour el-'Abid, mensurations aux Qouçour el 'Izeila* (Genève: Georg, 1967); idem, S. Favre and D. Weidmann, *Kellia. Topographie. Recherches suisses d'archéologie copte*, vol. 2 (Genève: Georg, 1972).
- 47 F. Dumas and Antoinne Guillaumont et al., *Kellia I: Kom 219. 1964–65* (Cairo: IFAO, 1969).
- 48 Rene-Georges Coquin, "Kellia: French Archaeological Activity," *CE*.
- 49 Archibald H. Sayce, "Esneh: Coptic Churches," *AJA* 10 (1895): 383.
- 50 Ibid.
- 51 Ibid.
- 52 F. 'Abd el Malek Gattas, "Découvertes d'un ensemble souterrain copte dans le désert d'Ésné," *ASAE* 54 (1957): 245–249.
- 53 Serge Sauneron, *Esna. Vol. 1: Quatre campagnes à Esna* (Cairo: IFAO, 1959), 34–35; idem, "Fouilles d'Esna: Monastères et ermitages," *CRAIB* 111.3 (1967): 412; idem, "Les neuvième et dixième campagnes archéologiques à Esna," *BIFAO* 67 (1969): 103–112.
- 54 S. Sauneron and J. Jacquet, *Les ermitages chrétiens du désert d'Esna, I-IV*. 4. vols. (Cairo: IFAO, 1972). Hereafter *Esna*.
- 55 Sauneron *Esna* IV: 20.
- 56 K. Ouda and W. A. Berggren, "Biostratigraphic Correlation of the Upper Paleocene–Lower Eocene Succession in the Upper Nile Valley: A Synthesis," *Micropaleontology* 49 (2003): 179–212.
- 57 Gideon Golany, *Earth-Sheltered Dwellings in Tunisia: Ancient Lessons for Modern Designs* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1988).
- 58 Joan M. Gero and Margaret W. Conkey, eds., *Engendering Archaeology* (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 1991).
- 59 Senake Bandaranayake, "Monastery Plan and Social Formation: The Spatial Organization of the Buddhist Monastic Complexes of the Early and Middle Historical Period in Sri Lanka and Changing Patterns of Political Power," in *Domination and Resistance*, ed. Daniel Miller, Michael Rowlands, and Christopher Tilley (London: Unwin Hyman, 1989), 179–195; Robin A. E. Coningham, "Monks, Caves, and Kings: Reassessment of the Nature of Early Buddhism," *World Archaeology* 27.2 (1995): 222–242; Roberta Gilchrist and Barney Sloane, *Requiem: The Medieval Monastery Cemetery in Britain* (London: Museum of London Archaeology Service, 2005); B. R. Mani and S. C. Saran, *Purabharati: Studies in Early Historical Archaeology and Buddhism* (Delhi: Sharada Publishing House, 2006); Julian Thomas, "Archaeologies of Place and Landscape," in *Archaeological Theory Today*, ed. Ian Hodder (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2001): 165–186.
- 60 Doron Bar, "The Christianisation of Rural Palestine during Late Antiquity," *JEH* 54 (2003): 401–421; idem, "Rural Monasticism as a Key Element in the Christianization of Byzantine Palestine," *HTR* 98.1 (2005): 49–65; Yizhar Hirschfeld, *The Judean Desert Monasteries in the Byzantine Period* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1992).
- 61 For example, a review of the current membership for the *International Association of Coptic*

- Studies* includes only a dozen archaeologists out of a membership of 275.
- 62 Rebecca Krawiec, *Shenoute and the Women of the White Monastery* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002); Caroline Schroeder, *Monastic Bodies: Discipline and Salvation in Shenoute of Atripe* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2007).
- 63 Dale B. Martin and Patricia Cox Miller, eds., *Gender, Asceticism, and Historiography: The Cultural Turn in Late Antique Studies* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2005).
- 64 See James Keenan, “Byzantine Egyptian Villages,” in *Egypt in the Byzantine World, 300–700*, ed. Roger Bagnall, 226–243 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007).
- 65 Examples include Stephen J. Davis, *Coptic Christology in Practice: Incarnation and Divine Participation in Late Antique and Medieval Egypt* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008); Emmanouela Grpeou, Mark Swanson, and David Thomas, eds., *The Encounter of Eastern Christianity with Early Islam* (Leiden: Brill, 2006); Arietta Papaconstantinou, Muriel Debié, and Hugh Kennedy, eds. *Writing ‘True Stores’: Historians and Hagiographers in the Late Antique and Medieval Near East* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2010); Arietta Papaconstantinou, *Le culte des saints en Égypte: des Byzantins aux Abbasides* (Paris: CNRS Editions, 2001); Samir Khalil Samir and Jorgen S. Nielsen, *Christian Arabic Apologetics during the Abbasid Period (750–1258)* (Leiden: Brill, 1994); Mark Swanson, *The Coptic Papacy in Islamic Egypt (641–1517)* (Cairo: American University of Cairo Press, 2010); Jason Zaborowski, *The Coptic Martyrdom of John of Phanijoit: Assimilation and Conversion in Thirteenth-Century Egypt* (Leiden: Brill, 2005).
- 66 See Scott Fitzgerald Johnson, ed., *The Oxford Handbook of Late Antiquity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012); Averil Cameron, Bryan Ward-Perkins, and Michael Whitby, eds., *The Cambridge Ancient History*, Vol. 14: *Late Antiquity: Empire and Successors, A.D. 425–600* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001).
- 67 Averil Cameron, “The ‘Long’ Late Antiquity: A Late Twentieth–Century Model,” in *Classics in Progress*, ed. T. P. Wiseman (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 165–191; Alice-Mary Talbot, “Byzantine Studies at the Beginning of the Twenty-First Century,” *The Journal of English and Germanic Philology* 105.1 *The State of Medieval Studies* (2006): 25–43.
- 68 James J. O’Donnell, “Late Antiquity: Before and After,” *Transactions of the American Philological Association* (1974–) 134.2 (2004): 203–213.
- 69 Philip Rousseau and Manolis Papoutsakis, eds., *Transformations of Late Antiquity. Essays for Peter Brown* (Farnham, UK; Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2009). David Hernandez de la Fuente, ed., *New Perspectives on Late Antiquity* (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2011).
- 70 Aziz Al-Azmeh, *The Emergence of Islam in Late Antiquity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014); Garth Fowden, *Before and After Muhammad: The First Millennium Refocused* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2015).
- 71 Otto Meinardus, *Christian Egypt: Ancient and Modern* (Cairo: AUC Press, 1977).
- 72 Henry Habib Ayrout, “Preface to First Edition,” in *Christian Egypt*, xiii.
- 73 Meinardus, *Christian Egypt*, xvii.
- 74 C. C. Walters, *Monastic Archaeology in Egypt* (Warminster: Aris & Phillips, 1974).
- 75 Walters, *Monastic Archaeology*, vii.
- 76 Alan B. Lloyd, review C. C. Walters, *Monastic Archaeology in Egypt* in *JEA* 61 (1975): 303.
- 77 Alexander Badawy, *Coptic Art and Archaeology: The Art of the Christian Egyptians from the Late Antique to the Middle Ages* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1978).
- 78 For example, he does provide the architectural elements of the Monastery of Jeremias at Saqqara and the most recent excavation results from the site of Kellia.
- 79 Badawy, *Coptic Art and Archaeology*, 33; idem, “Les premiers établissements Chrétiens,” 67–89.
- 80 Badawy, *Coptic Art and Archaeology*, 39.
- 81 Ibid., 48–57. Torp, “Murs d’enceinte des monastères coptes primitifs et couvents-forteresses,” 173–200.
- 82 For a discussion of walling, the dates of existing walls, and their functions see Grossmann, *Christliche Architektur in Ägypten*, 307–315.
- 83 Ibid., 79–100.
- 84 Badawy, *Coptic Art and Archaeology*, 33–35.
- 85 Wassef Boutros-Ghali, “Discours du Président de la Société d’archéologie copte, sur le passé des fouilles en Égypte,” in *Actes du Symposium des fouilles Coptes: Le Caire 7–9 Novembre 1996* (Cairo: Société d’archéologie copte, 1998), 9.
- 86 Ibid., 14.
- 87 Ibid.

- 88 The bibliography for the new projects is expanding rapidly. For a survey of the recent sites see Wipysycka, *Moines et communautés monastiques en Égypte (IVe–VIII siècles)*; H. Buschhausen, “Die Ausgrabungen von Dayr Abu Fana in Mittelägypten im Jahr 1987,” *JOB* 38 (1988): 353–362; H. Buschhausen et al., “Die Ausgrabungen in Abu Fana in Ägypten im Jahr 1988,” *JOB* 39 (1989): 241–257; H. Buschhausen et al., “Die Ausgrabungen in Dair Abu Fana in Ägypten in den Jahren 1991, 1992 und 1993,” *Ägypten und Levante* 6 (1996): 13–73.
- 89 Elizabeth S. Bolman ed., *Monastic Visions: Wall Paintings in the Monastery of St. Antony at the Red Sea* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2002); idem, ed., *The Red Monastery Church: Beauty and Asceticism in Upper Egypt* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2016); William Lyster, *The Cave Church of Paul the Hermit at the Monastery of St. Paul, Egypt* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2008).
- 90 Investigations into the Valley of the Queens in Thebes, in Upper Egypt, is just one example of an area not previously surveyed for monastic residences, and already dozens of monastic installations can be added to the map of monastic Egypt. Guy Lecuyot, “The Valley of the Queens in the Coptic Period,” in *Acts of the Fifth International Congress of Coptic Studies, Washington, 12–15 August 1992*, ed. David W. Johnson, vol. 2 (Roma: CIM, 1993): 263–276; Guy Lecuyot and Alain Delattre, “Ermitages de la montagne thébaine,” *BIFAO* 108 (2008): 419–421.
- 91 Amber L. Johnson, ed., *Processual Archaeology: Exploring Analytical Strategies, Frames of Reference, and Culture Process* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2004); William Harvey Krieger, *Can There Be a Philosophy of Archaeology? Processual Archaeology and the Philosophy of Science* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2006).
- 92 Stephen L. Dyson, “From New to New Age Archaeology: Archaeological Theory and Classical Archaeology – A 1990s Perspective,” *AJA* 97.2 (1993): 195–206; Richard A. Watson et al., “What the New Archaeology Has Accomplished,” *CA* 32.3 (1991): 275–291.
- 93 Colin Renfrew, “Divided We Stand: Aspects of Archaeology and Information,” *American Antiquity* 48.1 (1983): 3–16.
- 94 Processual archaeologists are often considered scholars who employ a form of structuralism to their analysis of archaeological evidence. The advocates for this new approach, known as new archaeology, sought to examine the material remains to identify patterns or processes, hence the appellation, that would assist in explaining why the archaeological record forms as it does. In particular, processualists highlight the importance of the environment, larger social actors, and repetitive actions as forces shaping the archaeological record. Danny Miller, “Artefacts as Products of Human Categorization Processes,” in *Symbolic and Structural Archaeology*, ed. Ian Hodder (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 89–98.
- 95 Postprocessual archaeologists seek to overturn the heavy structuralism of the processualists mentioned earlier. Postprocessualists, following the methodological and theoretical paths found in postmodernism, directly challenge the notion that there are predictable and knowable behaviors that can explain why the archaeological record shapes as it does. Specifically, postprocessualists have introduced the need to consider human agency, the role of gender, and even the role of archaeologist in order to understand how we view evidence from the past. The focus on the underrepresented actors in the past is a hallmark of post-processual studies.
- 96 Harald Johnsen and Bjørnar Olsen, “Hermeneutics and Archaeology: On the Philosophy of Contextual Archaeology,” *American Antiquity* 57 (1992): 419–436.
- 97 This was the topic of a discussion in April 2010 at Dumbarton Oaks with Byzantine archaeologists, entitled “Byzantine Archaeology in North America,” sponsored by Margaret Mullet, John Haldon, and Michael McCormick.
- 98 Luke Lavan and William Bowden, eds., *Theory and Practice in Late Antique Archaeology* (Leiden: Brill, 2003).
- 99 Harald Johnsen and Bjørnar Olsen, “Hermeneutics and Archaeology: On the Philosophy of Contextual Archaeology,” *AA* 57 (1992): 419–436.
- 100 “With a few exceptions, Byzantinists again have tended to shy away ... relying for their interpretational framework upon the unstated assumptions of the positivism of traditional western historiography. In the 1990s the effects of debates about what was called the New Historicism and of post-modernism left few marks on Byzantine Studies.” Elizabeth

- Jeffreys, John Haldon, and Robin Cormack, "Byzantine Studies as an Academic Discipline," in *The Oxford Handbook of Byzantine Studies*, eds. Elizabeth Jeffreys, John Haldon, and Robin Cormack (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 14. In contrast, Western medieval archaeologists have more quickly worked with new theories. See Roberta Gilchrist, "Monastic and Church Archaeology," *ARA* 43 (2014): 235–250.
- 101 Mircea Eliade, *The Sacred and the Profane: The Nature of Religion*, trans. Willard R. Trask (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1959).
- 102 Baruch Bokser, "Approaching Sacred Space," *HTR* 78: 3–4 (1985): 279–299.
- 103 Insoll, *Archaeology, Ritual, Religion*, 96–97.
- 104 Rebecca Krawiec, "Garments of Salvation: Representations of Monastic Clothing in Late Antiquity," *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 17.1 (2009): 125–150; Maria Parani, "Fabrics and Clothing," in *The Oxford Handbook of Byzantine Studies*, eds. Elizabeth M. Jeffreys, John F. Haldon, and Robin Cormack (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 407–420.
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- 129 Krawiec, *Shenoute and the Women of the White Monastery*, 44–46.
- 130 Claudia Rapp, “Early Monasticism in Egypt,” in *Female vita religiosa between Late Antiquity and the High Middle Ages: Structures, Developments and Spatial Contexts*, ed. Gert Melville and Anne Müller (Zurich: LIT Verlag, 2011), 21–42. As Rapp explores the misrepresentation of monastic history in Benedict of Nursia’s *Rule*, she demonstrates that women had a significant place within Egypt’s early monastic movement, more so than what the Western monastic tradition recounted.
- 131 Elm, *Virgins of God*, 25–59.
- 132 Krawiec, *Shenoute and the Women of the White Monastery*, 31–37.
- 133 Palladius, *Lausiac History*, 59.1. Between 1896 and 1907, Alexandre Gayet worked at Antinoë by extracting several Byzantine period mummified bodies, textiles, and papyri. The site was later excavated from 1913 to 1914 by John de Monins Johnson, on behalf of the Egypt Exploration Fund. His work and his discoveries of objects from daily life are part of a project directed by the British Museum under the direction of Elisabeth R. O’Connell. See E. Breccia and S. Donadoni, “Le prime ricerche italiane ad Antinoë,” *Aegyptus* 18 (1938): 285–310; John de Monins Johnson, *Antinoë and Its Papyri: Excavations by the Graeco-Roman Branch, 1913–1914* (London: Egypt Exploration Fund, 1914).
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- 3 AN ECOHISTORY AND
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- 26 *P.Mon.Epiph.* 162.
- 27 *O.Brit.Mus.Copt.* I p. 87 pl. 63.3. H. R. Hall, *Coptic and Greek Texts of the Christian Period from Ostraka, Stelae, Etc. in the British Museum* (London: Trustees of the British Museum, 1905), 79.
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- 29 Shenoute, *Ninth Canon*. MS. Copte 1302 fo. 123; Dwight W. Young, “Two Leaves from a Copy of Shenute’s Ninth Canon,” in *Wiener Zeitschrift für die Kunde des Morgenlandes*, eds. Arne A. Ambros, Hermann Hunger, and Markus Köhbach (Wien: Selbstverlag des Instituts für Orientalistik, 1998), 295–297.
- 30 A detailed discussion and analysis of the Pachomian monasteries and their process of settlement is found in Chapter 5.
- 31 *Panegyric on Apollo 16. A Panegyric on Apollo Archimandrite of the Monastery of Isaac by Stephen Bishop of Heracleopolis Magna*, ed., tr., K. H. Kuhn (Louvain: Secrétariat du CSCO, 1978), text 29; trans. 22.
- 32 Janet Timbie, “A Liturgical Procession in the Desert of Apa Shenoute,” in *Pilgrimage and Holy Space in Late Antique Egypt*, ed. David Frankfurter (Leiden: Brill, 1998), 425. Coptic for Shenoute’s quote is from Canon 3 is Johannes Leipoldt, ed., *Sinuthii Archimandritae Vita et Opera Omnia*, vol. 4, CSCO 73 (Paris: Imprimerie nationale, 1913), 120.
- 33 of Canon 3 from Timbie, *A Liturgical Procession*, 425–426.
- 34 J. E. Richards, “Conceptual Landscapes in the Egyptian Nile Valley,” in *Archaeologies of Landscape: Contemporary Perspectives*, eds. Wendy Ashmore and B. Knapp (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 1999), 83–100.
- 35 F. Hassan, “Desert Environment and Origins of Agriculture in Egypt,” *NAR* 19 (1986): 63–76.
- 36 Prior to the construction of the dam, 110 million tons of sediment was deposited throughout Egypt’s banks. Now, with the dam in place, Egypt must rely on chemical fertilizers instead of the rich silt. Alan K. Bowman and Eugene Rogan, eds., *Agriculture in Egypt from Pharaonic to Modern Times* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999).
- 37 David Jeffreys, “Regionality, Cultural and Cultic Landscapes,” in *Egyptian Archaeology*, ed. Willeke Wendrich (Chicester: Wiley, 2010), 104.
- 38 Wipszycka, *Moines et communautés monastiques en Égypte*, 148.
- 39 Ewa Wipszycka, “Les Recherches sur le Monachisme Égyptien,” in *Coptic Studies on the Threshold of a New Millennium*, eds. Mat Immerzeel and Jacques Van der Vliet (Leuven: Peeters, 2004), 839.
- 40 The *khamṣin* continues to interfere with human activity. For example, in World War II, the sand changed the electric currents enough that compasses were “useless” and “blinded” soldiers, ending with “an explosion that destroyed an Allied ammunition dump in eastern Libya”; Jan DeBlieu, *Wind: How the Flow of Air Has Shaped Life, Myth, and the Land* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1998), 57.
- 41 H. Steward Edgell, *Arabian Deserts: Nature, Origin, and Evolution* (New York: Springer, 2006), 56.
- 42 Maria Mossakowska-Gaubert, “Question d’éclairage: ermitage no 44 à Naqlun (Fayyoun),” *AI* 34 (2000): 338.
- 43 Sauneron and Jacquet, *Les ermitages chrétiens*, I, 42–46, fig. 17.
- 44 Nessim H. Nenein and Michel Wuttman, *Kellia II. L’ermitage copte QR 195. 1. Archéologie et architecture* (Cairo: IFAO, 2000).
- 45 Sauneron and Jacquet, *Les ermitages chrétiens*, I, 50–51, pl. XVIII.
- 46 On the well at White Monastery, see Peter Grossmann, Darlene L. Brooks Hedstrom, and Saad M. Mohamad Osman with Hans-Christian Noeske, “Second Report on the Excavation in the Monastery of Apa Shenute (Dayr Anba Shinuda) at Suhag,” *DOP* 63 (2009): 186–189.
- 47 *Life of Antony*, 54.
- 48 *Life of John the Little* 31. Zacharias (of Sakha), *The Holy Workshop of Virtue: The Life of John the Little*, trans. Maged S. A. Mikhail and Tim Vivian (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2010), trans. 92.
- 49 *Hist. Laus.* 2.1.
- 50 *Life of Shenoute* 24. Boharic Coptic text is J. Leipoldt, *Sinuthii Archimandritae Vita et Opera Omnia* (Paris: E. typographeo reipublicae, 1906). English translation is Besa, *The Life of Shenoute*, trans. David N. Bell (Kalamzao, MI: Cistercian Publications, 1983), 49–50.
- 51 For a discussion of Shenoute’s monastery, the water delivery system, and the use of water at the monastery, see Darlene L. Brooks Hedstrom, Elizabeth S. Bolman et al., “The White Monastery Federation Project: Survey and Mapping at the Monastery of Apa Shenoute

- (Dayr al-Anba Shinūda), Sohag, 2005–2007,” *DOP* 65 (2013): 358–363, figs. 23–31. Louise Blanke, “The Archaeology of Egyptian Monasticism: Settlement, Economy, and Daily Life of the White Monastery Federation” (Ph.D., University of Copenhagen, 2014).
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- 53 See James P. Allen, *The Art of Medicine in Ancient Egypt* (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2005), 9–14; Richard Hoath, *A Field Guild to the Mammals of Egypt* (Cairo: The American University in Cairo Press, 2003).
- 54 *Hist. Mon.* 9.10. Ward, 81.
- 55 *Life of Antony*, 50. Trans. Athanasius, 63.
- 56 Tim Vivian, “The Peaceable Kingdom: Animals as Parables in the Virtues of Saint Macarius,” *ATR* 85.3 (2003): 477–491; Dominic Alexander, *Saints and Animals in the Middle Ages* (Woodbridge, UK: Boydell Press, 2008).
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- 58 Oslo 1.5. Trans. Meyer, *Ancient Christian Magic*, 50.
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- 60 *Hist. Laus.* 18.4.
- 61 *Hist. Laus.* 18. 10.
- 62 Shenoute, *Sixth Canon*, MS. copte 130¹ (Bibliothèque Nationale de France) Codex XV 151 i 8. Text and trans. Dwight W. Young, “With Respect to the Fourth Work of Shenoute’s *Sixth Canon*,” *GM* 179 (2000): 85–100.
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- 64 Panagiotakopulu, “New Records for Ancient Pests,” 1244.
- 65 Bagnall, *Egypt in Late Antiquity*, 38–40.
- 66 *PBal.* 119. Paul E. Kahle, ed. *Bala’izah: Coptic Texts from Deir el-Bala’izah in Upper Egypt*, 2 vols. (London: Oxford University Press, 1954), 525–526.
- 67 *PBal.* 332. Kahle, *Bala’izah*, 768.
- 68 Quibell, *Saqqara*, II, 29.
- 69 See *P.Louvain Lefort* copt. 9/4. Eighth-century tax receipts from Middle Egypt speak of monks who work as the dung-man being paid with garum and fish, food – goods commonly referenced in monastic diets.
- 70 *Coptic Sayings of Saint Macarius of Egypt* 10. A parallel story is Macarius 13, trans. Ward, 130.
- 71 *Coptic Sayings of Saint Macarius of Egypt* 31, trans. 74.
- 72 *AP*, Anoub 1. *AP*, Macarius 23. *Coptic Sayings of Macarius of Egypt* 11, trans. 61. A similar practice of building indifference is seen in the practices of Diogenes the Cynic. He was known to ask statues questions in order to practice disappointment and to build his immunity to seek praise from others. See Diogenes Laërtius, *The Lives and Opinions of Eminent Philosophers*, Book IV.
- 73 Tombs at Amarna, Banī Hassan, and Shaykh Sa’īd all share these similar treatments. Personal observation, 2008.
- 74 *Sayings of Saint Macarius of Egypt* 8, trans. Vivian, 56. Parallel account is *AP* Macarius 33; trans. Ward, 134–136. The story continues to recount the lives of the two men identified as Maximus and Domitius, the two Roman princes who are the namesakes for Dayr al-Baramous, the Monastery of the Romans, located in Sketis. The monastery is the northernmost one still in use in Wadi Natrun today. Tim Vivian, “From Anonymous Foreigners to Royal Wonderworking Saints: History and Myth in the Coptic *Life of Maximus and Domitius*,” *Coptica* 8 (2009): 53–67.
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- 78 Peter Grossmann, “Die Unterkunftsbauten des Koinobitenklosters ‘Dair al-Balayza’ im Vergleich mit den Eremitagen der Mönche von Kellia,” in *Le site monastique copte des Kellia*, ed. by Philippe Bridel (Genève: Mission suisse d’archéologie copte de l’université de Genève, 1986), 33–40; idem, “Ruinen des Klosters Dair al-Balaiza in Oberägypten,” *JAC* 36 (1993): 171–205.
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- 80 Kemp, “Soil,” 84–92.
- 81 Christopher J. Kirby, “Preliminary Report of the Second Survey Season at Gebel El-Haridi, 1993,” *JEA* 80 (1994): 17.
- 82 Sugar became more prevalent as a cultivated item after the ninth century.
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- 84 David Klotz, “Triphis in the White Monastery: Reused Temple Blocks from Sohag,” *AS* 40 (2010): 197–213; idem, “The Naos of Nectanebo I from the White Monastery Church (Sohag),” *GM* 229 (2011): 37–52.
- 85 Clackson, N. 99. *CUL Michael*. 1120.
- 86 W. Wreszinski, “Zwei koptische Bauurkunden,” *ZAS* 40 (1902): 62–65.
- 87 Hjalmar Torp, “Le monastère copte de Baouît: Quelques notes d’introduction,” *Miscellanea coptica* 9 (1981): 1–8. MIFAO 39/1 58.1; 60.2; 81.1. Quibell, *Saqqara*, IV; 92 319.14.
- 88 Gérard Roquet, “Linteaux commémoratifs en dialecte fayoumique,” *BIFAO* 78 (1978): 339–345.
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- 91 Edward Hardy, *The Large Estates of Byzantine Egypt* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1931).
- 92 *P.Bal.* 241. Kahle, *Bala’izah*, text 666–667, trans. 667–668.
- 93 Alan Bowman, “Landholding in the Hermopolite Nome in the Fourth Century A.D.,” *JRS* 75 (1985): 137–163.
- 94 Laurens E. Tacoma, “Settlement and Population,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Roman Egypt*, ed. Christina Riggs (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 126–127.
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- 97 *Hist. Mon.* Prologue 10. Ward, *Lives of the Desert Fathers*, 50. In italics I have altered Ward’s translation to include the Greek terms.
- 98 *Hist. Mon.* 10.1. Ward, 82.
- 99 *Hist. Mon.* 8.2. Ward, 70.
- 100 *Hist. Mon.* 2. 1. Ward, 63.
- 101 *Hist. Mon.* 3. 1. Ward, 65.
- 102 *Hist. Laus.* 32.9.
- 103 Ruffini, *Social Networks in Byzantine Egypt*, 215–218.
- 104 Isabella Baldini Lippolis, “Private Space in Late Antique Cities: Laws and Building Procedures,” in *Housing in Late Antiquity*, eds. Luke Lavan, Lale Özgenel, and Alexander Sarantis (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 197–238; Catherine Saliou, *Les lois des bâtiments: voisinage et habitat urbain dans l’empire romain. Recherches sur les rapports entre le droit et la construction privée, du siècle d’Auguste au siècle d’Auguste au siècle de Justinien* (Beyrouth: Institut français d’archéologie du Proche-Orient, 1994); idem, “The Byzantine House (400–912): Rules and Representations,” in *Material Culture and Well-Being in Byzantium (400–1453)*, eds. Michael Grünbart et al. (Wien: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 2007), 199–206; Vasso Tourptsoglou-Stephanidou, “Appendix 3 – The Roman-Byzantine Building Regulations,” in *Mediterranean Urbanism: Historic Urban/ Building Rules and Processes*, ed. Besim Hakim (Dordrecht: Springer, 2014), 127–170. For a sample of some building codes, see Leo VI’s (r. 886–912) Nov. 113 in Deno John Geanakoplos, ed., *Byzantium: Church, Society, and Civilization Seen through Contemporary Eyes*

- (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984), no. 186, 261–262.
- 105 Lucas Van Rompay, “Society and Community in the Christian East,” in *The Cambridge Companion to the Age of Justinian*, ed. Michael Maas (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 239–266.
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- 107 Just as an example, MacCoull draws our attention to the nine monasteries in Aphrodito, and not a single monastery has been identified archaeologically, let alone excavated. Leslie MacCoull, “Monastic and Church Landholding in the Aphrodito Cadaster,” *ZPE* 178 (2011): 243.
- 108 Richard Alston, *The City in Roman and Byzantine Egypt* (London and New York: Routledge, 2001), 47–48.
- 109 *Ibid.*, 50.
- 110 *Ibid.*, 51.
- 111 Swanson, *Popes of Egypt*, 130.
- 112 Mena of Nikiou records a late seventh-century example in which Patriarch Isaac’s parents allowed an old monk to reside in building they owned outside the village. Mena of Nikiou, *Life of Isaac of Alexandria*, trans. David Bell (Kalamazoo, MI: Cistercian Publications, 1988), 50.
- 113 A dipinto from a rock tomb at Dayr al-Gabrāwī invokes the Trinity, the Mother Mary, and a series of monastic fathers, followed by the phrase “all who stay in this place.” W. Crum, “Appendix I: The Coptic Texts,” in *The Rock Tombs of Deir el Gebrawi*, eds. Norman de Garis Davies, et al. (London: Egypt Exploration Fund, 1902), 46.
- 114 Christopher Haas, *Alexandria in Late Antiquity: Topography and Social Conflict* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997), 238. Ewa Wipszycka, “Les confréries dans la vie religieuse de l’Égypte chrétienne,” in *Proceedings of the Twelfth International Congress of Papyrology*, ed. Deborah H. Samuel (Toronto: Hakkert, 1970), 511–524.
- 115 Malcolm Choat, “Property Ownership and Tax Payment in Fourth-Century Monasticism,” in *Monastic Estates in Late Antique and Early Islamic Egypt: Ostraca, Papyri, and Essays in Memory of Sarah Clackson*, eds. Anne Boud’hors et al. (Cincinnati, OH: American Society of Papyrologists, 2009), 129–140.
- 116 Choat, “Property Ownership,” 133, 135.
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- 118 Choat, “Property Ownership,” 138.
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- 120 Mariachiara Giorda, “Monastic Property in Egypt in Late Antiquity,” *Coptica* 8 (2009): 1–19.
- 121 MacCoull, *Coptic Legal Documents*, 2.
- 122 *P.Cair.Masp.* 1.67096 (dated 573–574). Leslie S. B. MacCoull, “Patronage and the Social Order in Coptic Egypt,” in *Egitto e storia antica dall’ellenismo all’età araba*, eds. Lucia Criscuolo and Giovanni Geraci (Bologna: Bologna Cooperativa Libreria Univ., 1989): 497–502; John Philip Thomas, *Private Religious Foundations in the Byzantine Period* (Washington, DC: Dumbarton Oaks Research Center Library and Collection, 1987), 62.
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- 124 For an overview of the patriarchs during this period, see Stephen J. Davis, *The Early Coptic Papacy: The Egyptian Church and Its Leadership in Late Antiquity* (Cairo: The American University in Cairo Press, 2004); Swanson,

- Popes of Egypt*, xiii; Maged S.A. Mikhail, *From Byzantine to Islamic Egypt: Religion, Politics, and Identity after the Arab Conquest* (London and New York: I.B. Tauris, 2014), 5–8; Johannes den Heijer, *Mawhub ibn Mansur ibn Mufarrig et l'historiographie copto-arabe: Étude sur la composition de l'Histoire des Patriarches d'Alexandrie* (Louvain: E. Peeters, 1989); Johannes den Heijer, "The Influence of the 'History of the Patriarchs of Alexandria' on the 'History of the Churches and Monasteries of Egypt' by Abu l'Makarim (and Abu Salih?)," *Par. Or.* 19 (1994): 415–443.
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- 126 *History of the Patriarchs* I.2:194. Trans. Evetts, 458; Thomas, *Private Religious Foundations*, 43.
- 127 Saliou, "The Byzantine House," 199–205.
- 128 Tourptsoglou-Stephanidou, "The Roman-Byzantine Building Regulations," 130. See Baldini Lippolis for full bibliography looking at law governing houses and housing, "Private Space in Late Antique Cities," no. 1, 197.
- 129 Alan Bowman, "Public Buildings in Roman Egypt," *JRA* 5 (1992): 495–503.
- 130 For the historiographical debate, see James Keenan, "Law in the Byzantine Period," in *Law and Legal Practice in Egypt from Alexander to the Arab Conquest: A Selection of Papyrological Sources in Translation, with Introductions and Commentary*, eds. James G. Keenan, J. G. Manning, and Uri Yiftach-Firanko (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 24–28.
- 131 See Georg Schmelz, "Clerics as Arbiters in Christian Egypt," and Chrysi Kotsifou, "Monks as Mediators in Christian Egypt," in *Law and Legal Practice in Egypt from Alexander to the Arab Conquest*, 517–529 and 530–540; Traianos Gagos and Peter van Minnen, *Settling a Dispute: Towards a Legal Anthropology of Late Antique Egypt* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1994), 41–43.
- 132 *History of the Patriarchs* I.2:202–203. The Church of the Angelion was built by the Serapeum, and the church dedicated to Sts. Cosmas and Damian was found near the amphitheater.
- 133 For a review of the doctrinal divide and nomenclature for the various constituents, see Mikhail, *From Byzantine to Islamic Egypt*, 10–15.
- 134 Baldini Lippolis, "Private Space in Late Antique Cities," 199.
- 135 *Ibid.*, 200; Frank Trombley, *Hellenic Religion and Christianization, c. 370–529*, vol. 2 (Leiden: Brill, 1993), 144; Beatrice Caseau, "The Fate of Rural Temples in Late Antiquity and the Christianisation of the Countryside," in *Recent Research on the Late Antique Countryside*, eds. William Bowden, Luke Lavan, and Carlos Machado (Leiden: Brill, 2004), 105–144; M. Jullien, "Le culte chrétien dans les temples de l'ancienne Égypte," *Les Études* 92 (1902): 237–253.
- 136 Baldini Lippolis, "Private Space in Late Antique Cities," 205.
- 137 Emphasis is mine. *Cod.Thedo.* 16.3.1. For historical context on the urban monastic movement's pressure in Constantinople, see Peter Hatlie, *The Monks and Monasteries of Constantinople c. 350–850* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 67–68; Clyde Pharr et al., eds. *The Theodosian Code and Novels, and the Sirmondian Constitutions* (Union, NJ: Lawbook Exchange, 2001), 449.
- 138 Aneta Skalec, "Private Buildings and Their Juridical Context in the Byzantine Near East," *Revista da Faculdade de Direito da Universidade de São Paulo* 106/107 (2011/2012): 67–83.
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- 141 Baldini Lippolis, "Private Space in Late Antique Cities," 219.
- 142 For the first critical edition and commentary on the text, see Catherine Saliou, *Le traité d'urbanisme de Julien d'Ascalon* (Paris: De Boccard, 1996); *idem*, "De la maison à la ville: le traité de Julien d'Ascalon," in *From Antioch to Alexandria*, eds. Katharina Galor and Tomasz Waliszewski (Warsaw: Institute of Archaeology, University of Warsaw, 2007), 169–173; Besim Hakim, "Julian of Ascalon's Treatise of Construction and Design Rules

- from Sixth-Century Palestine,” *JSAH* 60.1 (2001): 4–25.
- 143 For a discussion of the manuscript and the themes found within the works attributed to Julian of Ascalon, see Joseph Geiger, “Julian of Ascalon,” *Journal of Hellenic Studies* 112 (1992): 31–43; Catherine Saliou, “Julian d’Ascalon?” *JHS* 115 (1994): 168–171; Jaume Ribalta I Haro, *Dret urbanístic medieval de la Mediterrània* (Barcelona: Universitat Pompeu Fabra, 2005), 26–32.
- 144 Hakim, “Julian of Ascalon’s Treatise,” 10–12; Mary Beard, *Pompeii: The Life of a Roman Town* (London: Profile, 2009), 97.
- 145 Hakim, “Julian of Ascalon’s Treatise,” 22.
- 146 Tonio Sebastian Richter, “The Cultivation of Monastic Estates in Late Antique and Early Islamic Egypt: Some Evidence from Coptic Land Leases and Related Documents,” in *Monastic Estates in Late Antique and Early Islamic Egypt*, 208–209.
- 147 Walter E. Kaegi, “Egypt on the Eve of the Muslim Conquest,” in *The Cambridge History of Egypt: Islamic Egypt, 640–1517*, vol. 1, ed. Carl F. Petry (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 34–61.
- 148 *History of the Patriarchs*, I.2:221. Trans. Evetts, 485.
- 149 For a vivid representation of the tension between the historical account and the lack of archaeological evidence for widespread destruction, see Gideon Avni, “The Persian Conquest of Jerusalem (614 c.e.) – An Archaeological Assessment,” *BASOR* 357 (Feb. 2010): 35–48.
- 150 Alan Walmsley has pointed to the expansion of rural settlements in Syria in the seventh century, whereas the town centers contracted. He writes: “The reason why the steppe regions of Jordan flourished architecturally in the seventh century is unclear; it may have been connected to the relocation of elites from the main towns, in part in response to the outbreak of plague, a declining resource base in the agricultural areas, the changing sociopolitical objectives of settled nomads, or partly because of the growing importance of Damascus and routs south the Hijaz” (337). Alan Walmsley, “Economic Developments and the Nature of Settlement in the Towns and Countryside of Syria-Palestine, ca. 565–800,” *DOP* 61 (2007): 319–352.
- 151 See Tonio Sebastian Richter, *Rechtssemantik und forensische Rhetorik: Untersuchungen zu Wortschatz, Stil und Grammatik der Sprache koptischer Rechtsurkunden* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2008), 11–27; Gladys Frantz-Murphy, “Land-Tenure in Egypt in the First Five Centuries of Islamic Rule (Seventh–Twelfth Centuries A.D.),” in *Agriculture in Egypt from Pharaonic to Modern Terms*, eds. Alan Bowman and Eugene Rogan (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 237–266. For a study of wider trends in the seventh century, see Michael G. Morony, “Economic Boundaries? Late Antiquity and Early Islam,” *JESHO* 47.2 (2004): 166–194.
- 152 Mikhail, *Byzantine and Islamic Egypt*, 222; R. Guest, “The Delta in the Middle Ages,” *Journal of the Royal and Asiatic Society* 5/6 (1912): 941–980.
- 153 Mikhail, *Byzantine and Islamic Egypt*, 224–225.
- 154 *History of the Patriarchs*, I.2:236.
- 155 Mikhail, *Byzantine and Islamic Egypt*, 224.
- 156 Mena of Nikiou, *Life of Isaac of Alexandria*, trans. Bell, 61.
- 157 Mikhail, *Byzantine and Islamic Egypt*, 230.
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- 159 *P.KRU* 106, 31 May 734. The document’s author uses both heneete and monastērion when naming the Monastery of Paul. Trans. MacCoull, *Coptic Legal Documents*, 166–173.
- 160 Specifically the activities were sponsored by al-’Aziz (d.996) and his family. Yacov Lev, *State and Society in Fatimid Egypt* (Leiden: Brill, 1991), 22.
- 161 On the *dār al-wakāla*, see Samuel D. Goitein, *A Mediterranean Society: The Jewish Communities of the Arab World as Portrayed in the Documents of the Cairo Geniza*, vol. IV (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983), 26.
- 162 Marlis J. Saleh, “Government Intervention in the Coptic Church in Egypt during the Fatimid Period,” *The Muslim World* 91 (2001): 381–397; Muḥammad b. Yūsuf al-Kindī, *Kitāb al-Wulāt (Book of Governors)*, 131.
- 163 Hugh Kennedy, “Egypt as a Province in the Islamic Caliphate, 641–868,” in *The Cambridge History of Egypt: Islamic Egypt, 640–1517*, vol. 1, ed. Carl F. Petry (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 63.

- 164 The pervious significant jump in settlement and urban development occurs in the Hellenistic period under the Ptolemies. Karl W. Butzer, “Remarks on the Geography of Settlement in the Nile Valley during Hellenistic Times,” *BSGE* 33 (1960): 5–36.
- 165 *BGU* II 419 (=W.Chr. 373). J. Gasco, “Les ἀλλόφθλοι,” *Revue des études grecques* 110 (1997): 285–294; L. Mitteis and U. Wilcken, *Grundzüge und Chrestomathie der Papyruskunde* (Leipzig: B. Teubner, 1912).
- 166 See Benjamin Isaac, *The Limits of Empire: The Roman Army in the East* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990); Roger Rémondon, “Militaires et civils dans une campagne égyptienne au temps e Constance II,” *Journal des savants* 1965.1 (1965): 132–143.
- 167 On the Red Sea coast by Berenike, a small settlement at Shenshef has stone houses built in and amid the escarpment of the wadi. See Steven E. Sidebotham and Willemmina Z. Wendrich, *Berenike 1997: Report of the 1997 Excavations at Berenike and the Survey of the Egyptian Eastern Desert, including Excavations at Shenshef* (Leiden: CNWS, 1999); idem, *Berenike 1998: Report of the 1998 Excavations at Berenike and the Survey of the Egyptian Eastern Desert* (Leiden: CNWS, 2001).
- 168 The quarry and mining sites of Mons Claudianus, Mons Porphyrites, and Bir Umm Fawakhir are just a few examples of sites in the Eastern Desert that contain villages for workers. Excavation reports on the sites include the following: Valerie A. Maxfield, David Peacock, et al., *The Roman Imperial Quarries: Survey and Excavation at Mons Porphyrites, 1994–1998* (London: Egypt Exploration Society, 2001–); Carol Meyer et al., *Bir Umm Fawakhir* (Chicago, IL: Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago, 2000–2001); David Peacock, Valerie A. Maxfield, et al., *Mons Claudianus: Survey and Excavation, 1987–1993* (Cairo: IFAO, 1997–2006).
- 169 Steven E. Sidebotham describes such a collection of sites in the Eastern Desert. Umm Howeitat Bahri, Bir Gidami, Bir Handosi, Hitan Rayan, and Qaria Mustafa Amr Gamaa are five settlements, and each “lies at the end of a narrow valley or wadi relatively close to the Red Sea and all are within a two-day walk from other centers of habitation or major roads” (189). The sites include one- and two-roomed structures (min. 47–max. 141) made of local, unworked stone and without the use of mortar. It is important to note that, where possible, the builders used “natural rock faces” to form “walls and these are sometimes built up and abutted by free-standing walls ... Many structures have a semi-circular or rectilinear cleared area beside them or in between them, sometimes outlined by a one- or two-course high wall. These may have served as yards for working, animal husbandry or even gardening” (189). Steven E. Sidebotham, Hans Barnard and Gillian Pyke, “Five Enigmatic Late Roman Settlements in the Eastern Desert,” *JEA* 88 (2002): 187–225.
- 170 Darlene L. Brooks Hedstrom, “Architects: Designing the Monastic Dwelling Place,” in *Egypt in the Byzantine World, 300–700*, ed. Roger Bagnall (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 368–389.
- 171 In part, the difficulty with looking at Egypt’s rural landscape or countryside stems from the limited regional survey work that is possible in Egypt; thus, “While some regions such as Syria and Italy have been extensively surveyed over several decades, few surveys exist for Asia Minor or Egypt. Thus the heterogeneity of available information makes it impossible to give a complete or fully balanced picture of the state of the countryside in every region during late Antiquity” (8). For a discussion of the countryside as a physical and theoretical entity in archaeological studies in other areas of the late Roman and Byzantine Empire, see Alexandra Chavarria and Tamara Lewit, “Archaeological Research on the Late Antique Countryside: A Bibliographic Essay,” in *Recent Research on the Late Antique Countryside*, eds. William Bowden, Luke Lavan, and Carlos Machado (Leiden: Brill, 2004), 3–51.
- 172 For considerations of the landscape and Byzantine monastic settlement, see Jacob Ashkenazi and Mordechai Aviam, “Monasteries, Monks and Villages in Western Galilee in Late Antiquity,” *JLA* 5 (2012): 269–297; Doron Bar, “The Christianization of Rural Palestine during Late Antiquity,” 401–421; idem, “Rural Monasticism,” 49–65; Beat Brenk, “Monasteries as Rural Settlements: Patron-Dependence or Self-Sufficiency?” in *Recent Research on the Late Antique Countryside*, eds. William Bowden, Luke Lavan, and Carlos Machado (Leiden: Brill, 2004), 447–478;

- Joseph Patrich, "Monastic Landscapes," in *Recent Research on the Late Antique Countryside*, eds. William Bowden, Luke Lavan, and Carlos Machado (Leiden: Brill, 2004), 413–446. A study of later developments of monastic landholdings in a rural landscape is Fotini Kondyli, "Tracing Monastic Economic Interests and Their Impact on the Rural Landscape of Late Byzantine Lemnos," *DOP* 64 (2010): 129–150.
- 173 Bagnall, *Egypt in Late Antiquity*, 18.
- 174 A. Graham and J. Bunbury, "The Ancient Landscapes and Waterscapes of Memphis," *EA* 27 (2005): 17–19; H. Kees, *Ancient Egypt: A Cultural Topography*, trans. T. G. H. James (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1977).
- 175 Lewis Binford, *In Pursuit of the Past: Decoding the Archaeological Record* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983).
- 176 David Sibley, "Outsiders in Society and Space," in *Inventing Places: Studies in Cultural Geography*, edited by Kay Anderson and Fay Gale (Melbourne: Longman Cheshire, 1992), 107.
- 177 Sibley, "Outsiders in Society," 112.
- 178 Ibid.
- 179 David Brakke, *Demons and the Making of the Monk: Spiritual Combat in Early Christianity* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006).
- 180 Belden C. Lane, *The Solace of Fierce Landscapes: Exploring Desert and Mountain Spirituality* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998).
- 181 Sibley, "Outsiders in Society," 112.
- 182 Sibley, "Outsiders in Society," 112.
- 183 Peter Brown, "The Rise and Function of the Holy Man in Late Antiquity, 1971–1997" *J ECS* 6.3 (1998): 353–376.
- 184 For examples of the military imagery of monks prepared for battle, see Thomas F. X. Noble and Thomas Head, eds., *Soldiers of Christ: Saints and Saints Lives from Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University, 1995). A full development of the ways in which pilgrims regarded monastics is Georgia Frank's *Memory of the Eyes* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000).
- 185 Sibley, "Outsiders in Society," 113.
- 186 Trifkovic, "Persons and Landscapes," 258.
- 187 Ibid.
- 188 Antony G. Brown, *Alluvial Geoarchaeology: Floodplain Archaeology and Environmental Change* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 3.
- 189 Karl W. Butzer, *Archaeology as Human Ecology: Method and Theory for a Contextual Approach* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 39.
- 190 Butzer, *Archaeology as Human Ecology*, 39.
- 191 The relationship between agency and the archaeological record is a point of discussion in many areas. See Bruno David, "Intentionality, Agency and an Archaeology of Choice," *CAJ* 14.1 (2004): 67–71; Eleanor Harrison-Buck, "Architecture as Animate Landscape: Circular Shrines in the Ancient Maya Lowlands," *AA* 114.1 (2012): 64–80; Matthew H. Johnson, "Conceptions of Agency in Archaeological Interpretation," *JAA* 8.2 (1989): 189–211; Lynn Meskell, "The Somatization of Archaeology," *NAR* 29 (1996): 1–17; V. Trifkovic, "Persons and Landscapes: Shifting Scales of Landscape Archaeology," in *Confronting Scale in Archaeology: Issues of Theory and Practice*, eds. Gary Lock and Brian Leigh Molyneux (New York: Springer, 2006), 257–271.
- 192 Karl Butzer, *Early Hydraulic Civilization in Egypt: A Study in Cultural Ecology* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1976), 101; D. W. Rathborne, "Settlement and Society in Greek and Roman Egypt," in *Proceedings of the 20th International Congress of Papyrologists Copenhagen, 23–29 August, 1992*, ed. Adam Bülow-Jacobsen (Copenhagen: Museum Tusculanum Press, 1994), 137.
- 193 Gillian Pyke, "Panehsy Church Project 2009: Settlement Survey," in Barry Kemp, "Tell el-Amarna, 2008–9" *JEA* 95 (2009): 27–30; idem, Anna Stevens, and Johanna Sigl, "Panehsy Church Project 2008, Settlement Survey," in Barry Kemp, "Tell el-Amarna, 2007–8," *JEA* 94 (2008): 44–54; idem, "Survey of the Christian Church and Later Remains in the Tomb of Panehsy (No. 6)," in Barry Kemp, "Tell el-Amarna, 2006–7," *JEA* 93 (2007): 35–49; idem, "The Christian Settlement at the Amarna North Tombs," *EA* 37 (2010): 1–3. For earlier considerations of Amarna, see Michael Jones, "The Early Christian Sites at Tell el-Amarna and Sheikh Said," *JEA* 77 (1991): 129–144; N. de G. Davies, *The Rock Tombs of El Amarna, II: The Tombs of Panehsy and Meryra II* (London: Egypt Exploration Fund, 1905): plates xxiv–xxv.

- 194 Pyke is careful in asserting whether the dwellings were monastic residences. The settlement yielded very little material for ascertaining the occupation of the inhabitants. Pyke, “Panehsy Church Project 2009,” 30. amarnaproject.com/pages/recent_projects/material_culture/roman_plaster.shtml.
 - 195 Pyke, “Panehsy Church Project 2008,” 54.
 - 196 Tim Ingold, *The Perception of the Environment* (London: Routledge, 2002).
 - 197 Bill Hillier and Julienne Hanson, *The Social Logic of Space* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 9.
 - 198 Edward Swenson, “The ‘Disjunctive Approach’ to the Archaeological Analysis of Ritual Politics,” in *Religion, Archaeology and the Material World*, ed. Lars Fogelin (Carbondale: Center for Archaeological Investigations, Southern Illinois University, 2008), 240.
- 4 LATE ANTIQUE DOCUMENTARY EVIDENCE AND THE MONASTIC LANDSCAPE
- 1 James Goehring, “The Dark Side of Landscape: Ideology and Power in the Christian Myth of the Desert,” *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* 33.3 (2003): 437–451; idem, “The Encroaching Desert: Literary Production and Ascetic Space in Early Christian Egypt,” *J ECS* 1.3 (1993): 281–296.
 - 2 The Coptic *Lives* contain extensive sections on the land that are not included in the shorter, redacted Greek text of Palladius’s *Lausiac History*. This may reflect particularly local interests that were not seen as particularly of interest or of importance to Greek-speaking audiences. See Tim Vivian’s discussion of the relationship between the Greek text and the Coptic sections in *Four Desert Fathers: Pambo, Evagrius, Macarius of Egypt and Macarius of Alexandria* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 2004), 25–52. Also Bentley Layton, “Social Structure and Food Consumption in an Early Christian Monastery: The Evidence of Shenoute’s Canons and the White Monastery Federation A.D. 385–465,” *Le Muséon* 115 (2002): 27, n. 9.
 - 3 For *šafe*, see Crum, *Coptic Dictionary*, 610a, 839b, and Jaroslav Černý, *Coptic Etymological Dictionary* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976), 261. *Šafe* derives from *h3ft*, a type of land and is linked to the Egyptian verb, *hf*, “to destroy.” *Toou* is a direct loan word from the Egyptian for “mountain” (*tw*). Cerny, *Coptic Etymological Dictionary*, 199.
 - 4 *Life of Pambo*, 1, 5, 8; *Life of Evagrius*, 10, 28. For a critical assessment of the Coptic text, see Adalbert de Vogüé and Gabriel Bunge, *Quatre ermites égyptiens: d’après les fragments coptes de l’Histoire Lausiacque* (Bégrolles-en-Mauges: Abbaye de Bellefontaine, 1994). For examples of *šafe*, see Vivian, *Four Desert Fathers*, 60, 62, 88; for *toou*, see Vivian, *Four Desert Fathers*, 57, 79.
 - 5 For the appearance of monasteries in the desert plains, eighteenth- and nineteenth-century travelers record similar impressions on seeing monastic settlements arising from the desert at several kilometers. Thomas Cook’s famous travelogues describe Wadi al-Natrun’s deserts as dreary and the monasteries hold striking views of the “desert wastes on the outside.” *Cooks’ Tourists’ Handbook for Egypt, the Nile, and the Desert* (London: Thomas Cook & Son, 1876), 208.
 - 6 Lane, *The Solace of the Fierce Landscapes*, 160–176.
 - 7 Goehring, *Ascetics, Society, and the Desert*, 82; Tim Vivian, *Histories of the Monks of Upper Egypt and the Life of Onnophrius* (Kalamazoo, MI: Cistercian Publications, 1993), 18–26; idem, “Mountain and Desert,” 15–21.
 - 8 The idea of the desert being equated with the vastness of a landscape, and in particular the wilderness, appears in areas outside of Egypt where forests and seas are equivalent to deserts, as they are dangerous landscapes. See Ellen F. Arnold, *Negotiating the Landscape: Environment and Monastic Identity in the Medieval Ardennes* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013), 22–24.
 - 9 Vivian, *Histories of the Monks of Upper Egypt*, 24. Émile Amélineau, *La géographie de l’Égypte à l’époque copte* (Paris: Imp. Nationale, 1893).
 - 10 While cognitive archaeologists espouse that one can understand the ancient mind, critics point out the limits of the confidence we can have in knowing about emotions and thoughts in antiquity. Cognitive archaeologists often work with preliterate communities, and therefore the written accounts that offer stronger evidence for inferring emotion and thought are not available for enhancing an interpretation of the evidence. For a discussion and

- relevant bibliography outlining the dangers of cognitive archaeology, see Garofoli and Haidle, “Epistemological Problems in Cognitive Archaeology,” 1–35. An introduction to cognitive archaeology is Colin Renfrew, “What Is Cognitive Archaeology,” *Cambridge Archaeology Journal* 3.2 (1993): 247–270 and Sophie A. de Beaune, Fredrick L. Coolidge, and Thomas Wynn, eds, *Cognitive Archaeology and Human Evolution* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 15–24.
- 11 Roger S. Bagnall, *Reading Papyri: Writing Ancient History* (New York: Routledge, 1995), 46–61.
 - 12 A similar phenomenon appears in the terms used to describe the different kinds of monks. See Malcolm Choat, “The Development and Use of Terms for ‘Monk’ in Late Antique Egypt,” *JAC* 45 (2002): 5–23; idem, “Philological and Historical Approaches to the Search for the ‘Third Type’ of Egyptian Monk,” in *Coptic Studies on the Threshold of a New Millennium*, ed. Mat Immerzeel and Jacques van der Vliet (Leuven: Peeters, 2004), 857–865; Husson, Geneviere. “L’habitat monastique en Égypte à la lumière des papyrus grecs, des textes chrétiens et de l’archéologie,” in *Hommages à la mémoire de Serge Sauneron* (Cairo: IFAO, 1979), 191–207; E. A. Judge, “Fourth-Century Monasticism in the Papyri,” *Proceedings of the XVI International Congress of Papyrology* (Chico 1981): 613–620; Ewa Wipszycka, “Ἀναχωρητής, ἐρημίτης, ἔγκλειστος, ἀποτακτικός: Sur la terminologie monastique en Égypte,” *JJP* 31 (2001): 157–168.
 - 13 Monastery of Apa Thomas. *P.Sarga* 164; Trans., Crum and Bell, 134–135. For Monastery of Apa Gaios, see *Life of Longinus* 13; Tim Vivian, “Humility and Resistance in Late Antique Egypt: The Life of Longinus,” *Coptic Church Review* 20.1 (1999): 15.
 - 14 Crum, *Coptic Dictionary*, 440b; Cerny, *Coptic Etymological Dictionary*, 199.
 - 15 Crum, *Coptic Dictionary*, 153a; Cerny, *Coptic Etymological Dictionary*, 77.
 - 16 Crum, *Coptic Dictionary*, 373b–374a; Werner Vycichl, *Dictionnaire étymologique de la langue copte* (Leuven: Peeters, 1983), 202.
 - 17 Crum, *Coptic Dictionary*, 692a; Cerny, *Coptic Etymological Dictionary*, 289.
 - 18 Crum, *Coptic Dictionary*, 21a.
 - 19 *Laura* appears in monastic texts to describe independent communities, but is much rarer in comparison to the other terms discussed earlier in Egyptian sources. A few examples appear in hagiographies. *A Homily on the Virtues of Saint Longinus* includes the identification in which Apa Longinus is called the “hegoumenos of the lavra”; Leo Depuydt, “A Homily of the Virtues of Saint Longinus Attributed to Basil of Penje,” in *Coptology: Past, Present, and Future*, eds. S. Giversen, M. Krause, and P. Nagel (Leuven: Peeters, 1994), 282.
 - 20 The linguistic discussion of the terminology used for understanding monastic nomenclatures appears in a variety of other studies referenced later in the chapter. My objective here is not to reproduce this work, but rather to provide an introduction for those not as familiar with Coptic descriptions of the built environment and the Egyptian landscape with an understanding of the terms, the interchangeable nature of some words, and the lack of specificity in designating particular topographical or geological features.
 - 21 Pierre Bonnerue, “Éléments de topographie historique dans les règles monastiques occidentales,” *Studia Monastica* 37.1 (1995): 57–77.
 - 22 *Petra*, meaning stone, is used less frequently than *toou*, and it evokes more explicitly biblical imagery. In *P.Camb. UL Green* 6, Paule writes to a brother at the “Monastery of Apa Mena,” literally the “rock” of Apa Mena. Clackson, *Coptic and Greek Texts*, 111–112. *P.Bal.* 130 directly identifies a monk’s home community in Greek as the “Rock of Abba Poulei”; Nikolaos Gonis, “Arabs, Monks, and Taxes: Notes on Documents from Deir el-Bala’izah,” *ZPE* 148 (2004): 215.
 - 23 Crum, *Coptic Dictionary*, 440b.
 - 24 H. Cadell and R. Rémondon, “Sens et emplois de τὸ ὄρος dans les documents papyrologiques,” *Revue des études grecques* 80 (1967): 343–349.
 - 25 *P.Camb. UL Green* 8 side (B). Sarah Clackson, *It Is Our Father Who Writes: Orders from the Monastery of Apollo at Bawit* (Cincinnati, OH: American Society of Papyrologists, 2008), 44–45.
 - 26 Vladimir de Bock, *Matériaux pour servir à l’archéologie de l’Égypte chrétienne* (St. Petersburg: E. Thiele, 1901), 69.
 - 27 *Panegyric on Apollo* 1, 10. Trans. K. H. Kuhn, *A Panegyric on Apollo Archimandrite of the Monastery of Isaac by Stephen Bishop of Heracleopolis Magna* (Louvain: Secrétariat du CSCO, 1978), 1, 13–14.

- 28 Giorda begins her study of the establishment of monastic settlements with a careful analysis of papyrological evidence for the various sites mentioned in the Theban area as *topos* or *ma*. See Mariachia Giorda *Il Regno di Dio in Terra: Le fondazioni monastiche egiziane tra V e VII secolo* (Rome: Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura, 2011), 21–29.
- 29 John Bauschatz, *Law and Enforcement in Ptolemaic Egypt* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 351.
- 30 See Adam Rabinowitz, “Lease of Part of a House and Workshop,” *BASP* 38 (2001): 51–62.
- 31 Etienne Bernand, “ΤΟΠΟΣ dans les inscriptions grecques d’Égypte,” *ZPE* 98 (1993): 110.
- 32 *Topos* can bear a variety of meanings such as place, monastery, and even tomb. See Thelma K. Thomas, “*Topoi*: Investigations into Some Social and Spiritual Geographies of Post-Pharaonic Egypt,” *BASP* 35 (1998): 9–16. The recently discovered tomb of Shenoute at the White Monastery has a dipinto with “a lacuna that terminates with the normative masculine singular ending –ος. There are various possibilities for reconstructing the original wording ... the word *topos* (‘place/monastery/shrine/tomb’), a term commonly attested among Greco-Egyptian epigraphic corpus as a designation for the burial place or pilgrimage shrine of a saint, sometimes accompanied by the adjective ἅγιος (‘holy’)” (Bolman et al., “Shenoute and a Recently Discovered Tomb Chapel,” 460).
- 33 A. Bataille, “Un graffiti de la montagne thébaine,” *BIFAO* 38 (1939): 131, 145; idem, *Les Memnonia: recherches de papyrologie et d’épigraphie grecques sur la nécropole de la Thèbes d’Égypte aux époques hellénistique et romaine* (Cairo: IFAO, 1952); Jules Baillet, *Inscriptions grecques et latines des tombeaux des rois ou syringes à Thèbes* (Cairo: IFAO, 1920).
- 34 Dominic Montserrat and Lynn Meskell, “Mortuary Archaeology and Religious Landscape at Graeco-Roman Deir el-Medina,” *JEA* 83 (1997): 183.
- 35 W. Brunsch, “Griechische und koptische Graffiti aus Medinet Habu,” *Wiener Zeitschrift für die Kunde des Morgenlandes* 75 (1983): 19–34.
- 36 MH 1213, 1507, 1773, 2424, 3990, 4024. Elizabeth Stefanski and Miriam Lichtheim, *Coptic Ostraca from Medinet Habu* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1952), 18.
- 37 Leslie S. B. MacCoull, “A Date for *P.KRU 105*?” in *Proceedings of the Twenty-Fifth International Congress of Papyrology, Ann Arbor 2007* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2010), 449–454; W. Godlewski, *Le monastère de Phoibammon* (Warsaw: PWN, 1986), 63–64; A. Łajtar, *Deir el-Bahri in the Hellenistic and Roman Periods: A Study of an Egyptian Temple Based on Greek Sources* (Warsaw: Warsaw University and the Raphael Taubenschlag Foundation, 2006), 94–104.
- 38 Giorda identifies sixteen sites in the papyrological record for *topos* of Apa X. See *Il Regno di Dio in Terra*, 8–10.
- 39 SB XX 14626. Alia Hanafi, “A Letter from the Archive of Dioscorus,” in *Proceedings of the XVIII International Congress of Papyrology*, ed. Basil G. Mandilaras (Athens: Greek Papyrological Society, 1988), 91–106. For a full discussion of the author, his archives, and the connections between the monastic world and that of an urban elite, see Leslie MacCoull, *Dioscorus of Aphrodito: His Work and His World* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988).
- 40 Arietta Papaconstantinou, “The Cult of Saints: A Haven of Continuity in a Changing World,” in *Egypt in the Byzantine World, 300–700*, ed. Roger Bagnall (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 356–359.
- 41 No. 270. Quibell, *Excavations at Saqqara*, 1908–1910.
- 42 Thelma Thomas interprets this inscription as reflecting the “symbolically shrinelike” nature of Christian cenotaphs (*Late Antique Egyptian Funerary Sculpture*, 19). *Topos* can also mean chapel or church and thus context is vital for ascertaining meaning.
- 43 Ewa Wipszycka, *Les Ressources et les activités économiques des églises en Égypte: du IV^e au VIII^e siècle* (Bruxelles: Papyrologica Bruxellensia, 1972), 13.
- 44 Papaconstantinou, *Le culte des saints en Égypte*, 269–270.
- 45 A. van Lantschoot, *Recueil des colophons des manuscrits chrétiens d’Égypte* (Milano: Cisalpino-Goliardica, 1973), 127–131; Cerny, *Coptic Etymological Dictionary*, 289.
- 46 Crum, *Coptic Dictionary*, 692a.
- 47 Armand Veilleux, “Monasticism and Gnosis in Egypt,” in *The Roots of Egyptian Christianity*, eds. Birger A. Pearson and James E. Goehring (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1986), 303.

- 48 BL Or. 6201B (94). Clackson, *It Is Our Father*, 96.
- 49 Layton, “Social Structure and Food Consumption,” 26, n. 7.
- 50 See *Letters and Sermons of Besa*, ed. and trans., K. H. Kuhn (Louvain: L. Durbecq, 1956). A selection includes 15.I.1; 23.II.2; 27.III.3; 28.IV.3; 29.IV.4; 36.IV.1; 38.I.5.
- 51 *PCLT* 2 and 4. See text and trans. A. Arthur Schiller, ed. and trans., *Ten Coptic Legal Texts* (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1932).
- 52 Fidelis Ruppert, *Das pachomianische Mönchtum und die Anfänge klösterlichen Gehorsams* (Münsterschwarzach: Vier-Türme, 1971), 60–84.
- 53 G. Husson, “Houses in Syrene in the Patermouthis Archive,” *BASP* 27 (1990): 123–137.
- 54 *O.Brit.Mus.Copt.* I p. 146.
- 55 *Ibid.* p. 94–95 pl. 66. 2.
- 56 The Coptic phrase (*ma nšōpe*) is a construction in which the noun *ma*, meaning *place*, is linked to the verb *šōpe*, *to be or become*, to create the expression “dwelling place.” Coptic *ma nšōpe* derives from *kheper*, “to become,” and not from Egyptian *hmsi* sitting down or to sit in a place. Therefore, the expression is literally “to become a place.” Cerny, *Etymological Dictionary*, 249. See also Bentley Layton, *A Coptic Grammar*, 2nd ed. (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 2004), 88.
- 57 Unlike *topos*, which has a specific connotation of a special or unique physical location, *ma* is general and does not carry the same degree of physical specificity. For example, in ostraca from Bawit, two shipments of wheat were gathered from the *ma* of a man named Pabouke for delivery to the *topos* of Apa Apollo. O. Bawit IFAO 9, 12. Anne Boud’hors, ed., *Ostraca grecs et coptes de Baouît* (Cairo: IFAO, 2004), 26, 32.
- 58 Quibell, *Excavations at Saqqara, 1908–1910*, no. 319, 99–100. In Benjamin’s sermon *On Cana of Galilee*, “The Topos or Monastery of the Fathers” (*phiot mptopos*) is used to describe a monastic community.
- 59 Quibell, *Excavations at Saqqara, 1908–1910*, 100.
- 60 Florence Calament, “Nouvelles inscriptions à Baouît (Campagnes de 2003 et 2004),” in *Études coptes X Douzième journée d’études* (Lyon, 19–21 mai 2005), eds. Anne Boud’hors and Catherine Louis (Paris: De Boccard, 2008), 28–29 and fig. 6.
- 61 From Hall 21: Maspero 1931 n° 466; p. 129; n° 454, p. 133.
- 62 Stephen Davis, “Completing the Race and Receiving the Crown: 2 Timothy 4:7–8 in Early Christian Monastic Epitaphs at Kellia and Pherme,” in *Asceticism and Exegesis in Early Christianity*, ed. H.-U. Weidemann (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2013), 334–373.
- 63 No. 103. Qušūr al-Rubā’iyyāt 195, Room 12. Pascale Ballet, Nathalie Bosson and Marguerite Rassart-Debergh, *Kellia. II. L’ermitage copte QR 195. 2. La céramique, les inscriptions, les décors* (Cairo: IFAO, 2003), 277.
- 64 No. 23. QR 306. Room 2. Kasser, *Explorations aux Qouçour er-Roubā’iyyāt*, 297.
- 65 No. 53. QR 306. Room 4. Kasser, *Explorations aux Qouçour er-Roubā’iyyāt*, 304.
- 66 No. 56. QR 306. Room 4. Kasser, *Explorations aux Qouçour er-Roubā’iyyāt*, 306.
- 67 Crum, *Coptic Dictionary*, 287b. Monastic settlements, regardless of size, could be very densely built and contain a variety of areas for specialized work. In *P.Neph.* 48, written in Greek, one monk sold his house (*oikos*) with several rooms (*kellion*) that included a weaving mill, a granary, and a staircase up to another monk’s residence. *Oikos* is the equivalent of *ēi* and *kellion* is the equivalent for *ri*. For example, the fourth-century archive of Nepheros, head of the Melitian Monastery of Hathor in the Hermopolite nome, provides a vivid description of a Melitian monastery’s structure and design. Barbara Kramer, “Neuere Papyri zum frühen Mönchtum in Ägypten,” in *Philanthropia kai Eusebia: Festschrift für Albrecht Dihle zum 70. Geburtstag*, ed. Glenn W. Most, Hubert Petersmann, and Adolf Martin Ritter (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1993), 217–233.
- 68 Crum, *Coptic Dictionary*, 153.
- 69 Brooks Hedstrom, “Geography of the Cell,” 774–776.
- 70 No. 48. Quibell, *Excavations at Saqqara, 1907–1908*, 43.
- 71 No. 14. Quibell, *Excavations at Saqqara, 1907–1908*, 43 and plate XLIV, 4.
- 72 Clédat, *Baouît*, 105, 127.
- 73 *Ibid.*, 105, 107–108, 120, and 127.
- 74 No. 1 Quibell, *Excavations at Saqqara, 1907–1908*, 43.
- 75 Clédat, *Baouît*, 107.
- 76 Caroline Schroeder’s book and media project, *Monks and Their Children: Family and*

- Childhood in Early Egyptian Monasticism*, www.asceticchildren.org/About_the_Project.html; idem, “Child Sacrifice in Egyptian Monastic Culture: From Familial Renunciation to Jephthah’s Lost Daughter,” *J ECS* 20.2 (2012): 269–302; idem, “Children and Early Egyptian Monasticism,” in *Children in Late Antique Christianity*, eds. Cornelia B. Horn and Robert R. Phenix (Tubingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2010), 317–338; idem, “Monastic Family Values: The Healing of Children in Late Antique Egypt,” *Coptica* 10 (2011): 21–28. Documentary evidence from Dayr Apa Phoibammon at Dayr al-Bahri, for example, provides numerous examples of families offering children to the monastery as answers to prayers. See also Andrew S. Jacobs and Rebecca Kraweic, “Fathers Know Best? Christian Families in the Age of Asceticism,” *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 11.3 (2003): 257–263; Arietta Papaconstantinou, “Notes sur les actes de donation d’enfant au monastère thébain de Saint-Phoibammon,” *JJP* 32 (2002): 83–105.
- 77 Paul of Tamma is not referenced in any sources outside of Egypt and he does not appear as a source in the *Sayings of the Desert Fathers*. He is commemorated in list of saints in the *Coptic Liturgy of St. Basil*.
- 78 Ian Hodder, *Reading the Past: Current Approaches to Interpretation in Archaeology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 73–74. Hodder made the case in the 1980s for archaeologists to see the benefits of new theoretical models for considering how to move beyond symbolic meanings of things and place to analysis of cultural meanings and how to see them in the archaeological record.
- 79 Eliade, *The Sacred and the Profane*, 29.
- 80 Frank Burch Brown, *Good Taste, Bad Taste, and Christian Taste: Aesthetics in Religious Life* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 211.
- 81 Chapter 5 expands on these same terms by considering monastic literature, primarily hagiographies, as they illustrate a very different perspective that creates the generalized landscape that separates the reality of the land from the new religious monastic landscape.
- 82 *P.Bal.* 188. Kahle, *Bala’izah*, text 604, trans. 606.
- 83 The sources are unevenly representative of Middle and Upper Egyptian monastic communities owing in large part to the better state of preservation of papyri in those areas than in Lower Egypt (Mikhail, 935). Because of this simple fact of the nature of the sources, it is important to use all available sources to reconstruct the monastic milieu. Maged S. A. Mikhail, “An Orientation to the Sources and Study of Early Islamic Egypt (641–868 CE),” *History Compass* 8/8 (2010): 929–950.
- 84 For tabernacle or shrine imagery, see Brakke, *Making of the Monk*, 216–226; *Life of Antony* 14.1; Brooks Hedstrom, “Geography of the Monastic Cell,” 768–769.
- 85 Paul of Tamma, *On the Cell*, 77.
- 86 The following sources provide analysis for property laws, language, and usage in both secular and monastic sources: Tonio S. Richter, *Rechtssmantik und forensische Rhetorik: Untersuchungen zu Wortschatz, Stil und Grammatik der Sprache koptischer Rechtsurkunden* (Leipzig: H. Wodtke und K. Stegbauer, 2002); Artur Steinwenter, *Studien zu den koptischen Rechtsurkunden aus Oberägypten* (Amsterdam: Hakkert, 1967); Walter C. Will, *Erbrechtliche Untersuchungen auf Grund der koptischen Urkunden* (Wien: In Kommission bei R. M. Rohrer, 1954).
- 87 Roger Bagnall, “Monks and Property: Rhetoric, Law, and Patronage in the Apophthegmata Patrum and the Papyri,” *GRBS* 42 (2001): 7–24; Elisabeth R. O’Connell, “Transforming Monumental Landscapes in Late Antique Egypt: Monastic Dwellings in Legal Documents from Western Thebes,” *J ECS* 15:2 (2007): 239–273; Ewa Wipszycka, “Monks and Monastic Dwellings. *P.Dubl.* 32–34, *P.KRU* 105 and BL Ms. Or 6201–6206 Revisited,” in *Monastic Estates in Late Antique and Early Islamic Egypt. Ostraca, Papyri, and Essays in Memory of Sarah Clackson, Am. Stud. Pap. 46 (P.Clackson)*, eds. Anne Boud’hors, James Clackson, et al. (Cincinnati, OH: American Society of Papyrologists, 2009), 239–244. A broad overview of Byzantine poverty and wealth is still Evelyn Patlagean, *Pauvreté économique et pauvreté sociale à Byzance, 4e–7e siècles* (Paris: Mouton, 1977).
- 88 Daniel Caner, “Wealth, Stewardship, and Charitable ‘Blessings’ in Early Byzantine Monasticism,” in *Wealth and Poverty in Early Church and Society*, ed. Susan R. Holman (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2008), 224.
- 89 Jennifer Cromwell, “Keeping It in the Family: Property in Eighth Century A.D. Thebes,” *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 72.2 (2013): 213–232.

- 90 The late antique town of Jeme was built within the precinct of the walls that enclose the great temple of Medinet Habu in Thebes. The town was prosperous and interacted frequently with the monastic settlements located around the surrounding cliffs. This site is one of the few towns that one can use to compare with monastic domestic architecture to consider questions of similarity and difference. Some plans and details of the excavation of Jeme can be found in H. Nelson and U. Hölscher, *Medinet Habu Reports II: The Architectural Survey 1929/30: Third Preliminary Report*, Oriental Institute Communications 10 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1931); U. Hölscher, *The Excavations of Medinet Habu I: General Plans and Views*, Oriental Institute Publications 21 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1934); idem, *The Excavations of Medinet Habu, V: Post-Ramessid Remains*, Oriental Institute Publications 66 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1954). For a starting bibliography of the sources for the region as of 1989, see Terry Wilfong, “Western Thebes in the Seventh and Eighth Centuries: A Bibliographic Survey of Jême and Its Surroundings,” *BASP* 26:1–2 (1989): 89–145; Jean Doresse, “Monastères coptes aux environs d’Armant en Thébaïde,” *Analecta Bollandiana* 67 (1949): 327–349.
- 91 Wilfong, *Women of Jeme*, 47–58.
- 92 *P.CLT* 7. Schiller, *Ten Coptic Legal Texts*, 64–71.
- 93 Translation is Terry Wilfong, *Women of Jeme: Lives in a Coptic Town in Late Antique Egypt* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2002), 50–51.
- 94 See also *P.CLT* 8 in which part of house is sold, and *P.CLT* 10 in which Maria mortgages half of her house, likely meaning specific rooms, to pay off a debt. Schiller, 72–75, 80–83.
- 95 *P.KRU* 75. Walter E. Crum ed., *Koptische Rechtsurkunden des achten Jahrhunderts aus Djême (Theben), I. Band: Texte und Indices* (Leipzig: Zentralantiquariat der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik, 1912), 239–245.
- 96 Graffiti, ostraca, and papyri at the site references the settlement as a *topos* (*P.Mon.Epiph.* 90, 652) and specific areas as *manshöpe* (*P.Mon.Epiph.* 92).
- 97 *O.Brit.Mus.Copt.* I p. 79, pl. 59, 1; p. 87, pl. 63, 3.
- 98 *P.Mon.Epiph.* 84.
- 99 Ibid.
- 100 *O.Brit.Mus.Copt.* I p. 94 pl. 66, 2. See a table of the monastic constructions in Thebes in Giorda, *Il regno di Dio in Terra*, 7–10.
- 101 Discussion of the individual monastic communities is addressed in subsequent chapters.
- 102 O’Connell, “Transforming Monumental Landscapes,” 266.
- 103 *P.KRU* 75 9–20; O’Connell, “Transforming Monumental Landscapes,” 266. Similar language appears in *P.KRU* 65 in which Apa Phoibammon outlines the property for his heir, Victor. The will reads: “[C]oncerning the holy topos and all its dwelling places (*manshöpe*), namely its caves (*bēb*) which are set for us up in the same mountain (*toou*) by those who came before us, by our fathers according to God, through documents drawn up for use, our fathers to be commemorated for all time (32–36) ... [Victor] shall have absolute power over the holy topos of Saint Phoibammon which is set up in the Mountain (*toou*) of Jeme, and everything in it, whether gold or silver or garment, or brass, or document or book or cave or pit or tower or enclosure.” A. Arthur Schiller, “Coptic Wills, Translation and Commentary” (JD diss., University of California, Berkeley, 1926), 26–32.
- 104 *P.KRU* 75 67–74. Slightly modified trans. after Crum and Winlock, *Monastery of Epiphanius*, 346.
- 105 SB Kopt. I 4. Clackson, *Coptic and Greek Texts*, 80–85.
- 106 S. J. Clackson, “Reconstructing the Archives of the Monastery of Apollo at Bawit,” in *Atti del XXII congresso internazionale de papirologia 1998*, eds. I. Andorlini et al. (Firenze: Istituto papirologico “G. Vitelli,” 2001), 219–236; idem, “Museum Archaeology and Coptic Papyrology: The Bawit Papyri,” in *Coptic Studies on the Threshold of a New Millennium. Proceedings of the Seventh International Congress of Coptic Studies*, eds. Mat Immerzeel and J. van der Vliet (Leiden: Peeters, 2004), 477–489; Martin Krause, “Die Inschriften auf den Türsturzbalken des Apa-Apollo-Klosters von Bawit,” *Mélanges Antoine Guillaumont* (Geneva: P. Cramer, 1988), 111–120; idem, “Zu den nach Apollo benannten Klöstern in Ägypten,” in *Sprache und Geist. Peter Nagel zum 65. Geburtstag*, eds. W. Beltz et al. (Halle: Druckerei der Martin-Luther-Univsitat, 2003), 149–166; Leslie S. B. MacCoull, “The Apa Apollos Monastery of

- Pharouo (Aphrodito) and Its Papyrus Archive,” *Le Muséon* 106 (1993): 21–63.
- 107 The excavated monastery is discussed in greater detail in a subsequent chapter.
- 108 Clackson explains that she reads it as an “artificial basin” and thus is similar to the Greek *limnē*, Clackson, *Coptic and Greek Texts*, 83 n. 5.
- 109 See Clackson’s discussion of the descriptions of the Hermopolite monastery of Apa Apollo, *Coptic and Greek Texts*, 14–15. She also additional references to papyri with parallel examples of the use of *toou*, *topos*, *monastērion*, and *ma*. Similarly, Giorda observes the use of *ma* and *topos* for a few settlements in Thebe (*Il regno di Dio in Terra*, 25–29).
- 110 BL OR 6201–6204, 6206. For the Coptic texts and translation, see Leslie S. B. MacCoull, “The Bawit Contracts: Texts and Translations,” *BASP* 31 (1994): 141–158. The texts were the subject of Martin Krause’s dissertation, see “Das Apa-Apollon-Bawit: Untersuchungen unveröffentlichter Urkunden als Beitrag zur Geschichte des ägyptischen Mönchtums,” Ph.D. diss., University of Leipzig, 1958; idem, “Die koptischen Kaufurkunden von Klosterzellen des Apollo–Klosters von Bawit aus abbasidischer Zeit,” in *Monastic Estates in Late Antique and Early Islamic Egypt: Ostraca, Papyri, and Essays in Memory of Sarah Clackson (P. Clackson)*, eds. Anne Boud’hors, James Clackson, Catherine Louis, and Petra Sijpesteijn (Cincinnati, OH: American Society of Papyrologists, 2009), 159–169.
- 111 BL OR 6204.
- 112 Ibid. 6203.
- 113 James Goehring, “Through a Glass Darkly: Diverse Images of the Ἀποτακτικοί(αι) in Early Egyptian Monasticism,” in *Ascetics, Society, and the Desert: Studies in Early Egyptian Monasticism* (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 1999), 53–72.
- 114 BL OR 6206 and 6201. Krause, *Die koptischen Kaufurkunden*, 165–166.
- 115 The fifth text is dated five days earlier.
- 116 BL OR 6204 records that the property now owned to Hor was formerly owned by Joseh and Markos. By 848, BL OR 6206 lists the property as divided between a watchtower on the west and a place of Apa Pamoun.
- 117 BL OR 6203. MacCoull, *Bawit Contracts*, 144.
- 118 Ibid. 6206. MacCoull, *Bawit Contracts*, 152.
- 119 BL OR 6202. MacCoull, *Bawit Contracts*, 155.
- 5 TELLING STORIES ABOUT THE EGYPTIAN MONASTIC LANDSCAPE
- 1 Michèle Broze, *Les aventures d’Horus et Seth dans le Papyrus* Chester Beatty (Leuven: Uitgeverij Peeters, 1996); Ashraf I. Sadek, “Du désert des pharaons au désert des anachorètes,” *Le Monde Copte* 21–22 (1993): 5–14. Sadek points out that the terminology for the desert includes such works as *ḥ3st* (hilly country); *dšrt* (the red land vs. the black land of the fertile Nile Valley), and *smyt* (the necropolis and/or the desert). Siegfried Morenz, *Egyptian Religion*, trans. Anne E. Keep (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1973), 99–100. In an analysis of the meaning of t3 *dšr*, Morenz briefly suggests that the word sacred implies “setting apart,” “segregation,” and “sanctity.”
- 2 Chronology based upon Bruce G. Trigger et al., *Ancient Egypt: A Social History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983).
- 3 See James K. Hoffmeier, *Sacred in the Vocabulary of Ancient Egypt: The Term dšr, with Special Reference to Dynasties I–XX* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1985), 86.
- 4 Hoffmeier, *Sacred*, 87, 206; Edward Brovaski, “The Doors of Heaven,” *Orientalia* 46 (1977): 107–115. By the Late Period (664–323 BCE), *dšr* was replaced with *w’b*, which refers to a state of purity; in Coptic *w’b* became *ouop* and a place that was holy was the “place of purity or holiness.” Crum, *Coptic Dictionary*, 487b; Cerny, *Coptic Etymological Dictionary*, 214.
- 5 The exceptions to this include the pyramid and tomb builder towns built to accommodate the workmen and their families. The Old Kingdom village and tombs of the pyramid builders sit beside the pyramids at Giza. The Middle Kingdom site of Kahun served as the home to the pyramid builders who worked at Lahun. The most famous workmen’s village is the New Kingdom town of Dayr al-Medina, located in Thebes.
- 6 Steven E. Sidebotham, “Newly Discovered Sites in the Eastern Desert,” *JEA* 82 (1996): 181–192.
- 7 Veronica della Dora, *Landscape, Nature, and the Sacred in Byzantium* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 128.

- 8 Antoine Guillaumont, “La conception du désert chez les moines d’Égypte,” *Revue de l’histoire des religions* 188 (1975): 3–21.
- 9 Moses and the Israelites wandered in the wilderness of the Sinai for forty years (Exodus 15–20). In Hebrews 11, the author recounts the faith of the prophets and the great suffering they experienced in order to remain faithful to God’s missions. The desert in these two examples represents the punitive qualities of the landscape.
- 10 Judit M. Blair, *De-Demonizing the Old Testament: An Investigation of Azazel, Lilith* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2009), 18. In the *Book of Enoch*, Azazel is a demon in his own right. In Leviticus 16 we read of the Day of Atonement whereby two goats are offered for the sins of the Hebrews. The one selected for the desert, or wilderness, is given to Azazel, often translated as scapegoat, the god of the desert (Lev. 16: 6, 10, 26).
- 11 Profiles of such feats are presented in Brakke, *Demons and the Making of the Monk*, 127–156.
- 12 *Life of Macarius*, 93.
- 13 Belden Lane, “Desert Catechesis,” 292–314; idem, *The Solace of Fierce Landscape*, 160–165.
- 14 Besa, *Life of Shenoute*, 38–40.
- 15 *Life of Antony*, 8.2.
- 16 An excellent survey of the ascetic traditions in antiquity is Richard D. Finn, *Asceticism in the Graeco-Roman World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009).
- 17 Bernhard Lohse, *Askese und Mönchtum in der Antike und in der alten Kirche* (München and Wien: R. Oldenbourg, 1969); James A. Francis, *Subversive Virtue: Asceticism and Authority in the Second-Century Pagan World* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1995).
- 18 In the *Gorgias*, Socrates debates with Polus and Callicles about the manner in which one should live. Socrates’ dialogue with Callicles raises the question of whether a life led by control and moderation is a better life than one given to pleasures. *The Collected Dialogues of Plato*, eds. Edith Hamilton and Huntington Cairns (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1987), 273–276; John M. Dillon, “Rejecting the Body, Refining the Body: Some Remarks on the Development of Platonist Asceticism,” in *Asceticism*, eds. Vincent L. Wimbush and Richard Valantasis (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 80–87.
- 19 Aline Rousselle, *Porneia: On Desire and the Body in Antiquity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988).
- 20 *Life of Sabas* 16; trans. Cyril of Scythopolis, *Lives of the Monks of Palestine*, trans. Richard Price (Kalamazoo, MI: Cistercian Publications, 1991), 108–109.
- 21 Palladius famously begins the *Lausiac History* by describing the “invincible athletes” (Prologue 2) as “athletes of Christ” (Prolouge 5). His profiles on the individual monastics are actually descriptions of “a few short [athletic] contests out of the many mighty ones” in which they competed (Prologue 5).
- 22 Geoffrey Galt Harpham, *The Ascetic Imperative in Culture and Criticism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987).
- 23 Porphyry, *De abstinentia*, ed. by J. Bouffartigue and M. Patillon (Paris: Société d’Édition, 1977). The *w/b* priests were in particular known for spending selected periods of time away from the temple during which others anticipated that the gods might speak to the priest. Garth Fowden discusses the interaction between the growing philosophical communities and the priesthood in Late Antique Egypt in *The Egyptian Hermes: A Historical Approach to the Late Pagan Mind* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1986).
- 24 *De Abst.* 4.6–8. This passage also includes an extensive discussion of the diet of the priests and the duties that they performed. Pieter Willem van der Horst, *Chaeremon: Egyptian Priest and Stoic Philosopher* (Leiden: Brill, 1984). Van der Horst explains, as have others, that Chaeremon has written a rather romantic portrait of the priesthood following similar biographies of other meditative groups such as the Pythagoreans, as written by Iamblichus; the brahmans, by Philostratus; Essenes, by Pliny and Josephus; and the Therapeutae, by Philo. Nevertheless, the rhetorical construction of an ideal philosopher or religious figure illustrates the shared concepts of spaces being used for spiritual activities. The Pythagoreans preferred “the most holy spaces” for their contemplative life (*On the Pythagorean Life* 96). Iamblichus, *On the Pythagorean Life*, trans. John Dillon and Jackson Hershbell (Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press, 1991).
- 25 This description is not made of a Roman temple, but rather of an Egyptian temple.

- 26 Philo, *On the Contemplative Life or Suppliants*, in *Philo*, vol. 9, trans. F. H. Colson (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1967), 112–169.
- 27 The name *Therapeutae* derives from *therapeuo*, meaning to heal or to care for V. Nikiprowetzky, “Les Suppléants chez Philon d’Alexandrie,” *Revue des Études Juives* 121 (1963): 265–278.
- 28 A. M. Malingrey, *Philosophia: Étude d’un groupe de mots dans la littérature grecque des Présocratiques au IV^e siècle après J. C.* (Paris: Klincksieck, 1961).
- 29 G. Peter Richardson, “Philo and Eusebius on Monasteries and Monasticism: The Therapeutae and Kellia,” in *Origins and Method: Toward a New Understanding of Judaism and Christianity*, ed. by Bradley H. McLean (Sheffield, UK: JSOT Press, 1993), 334–359.
- 30 *Cont. Life* 2.
- 31 *Ibid.*, 13, 16, 18–20.
- 32 *Ibid.*, 20, 23. The presence of these signs of settlement gave the Therapeutae a sense of security due to their relative proximity to others outside of the walls of the city.
- 33 *Patristic Greek*, 548. For example, in *Cont. Life* 62, Philo uses *eremia* in his rebuke of men given over to desire, stating that such decadence is making the cities deserted or desolate.
- 34 *Cont. Life* 23.
- 35 F. Daumas, “La ‘solitude’ des Thérapeutes et les antécédents égyptiens du monachisme chrétien,” in *Philon d’Alexandrie: Colloque national du CNRS (Lyon 11–15 Septembre 1966)*, ed. R. Arnaldez et al. (Paris: Éditions du Centre national de la recherche scientifique, 1967), 347–358; Antoine Guillaumont, “Philon et les origines du monachisme,” in *Philon d’Alexandrie*, 361–373.
- 36 *Cont. Life* 24.
- 37 Daumas draws a similar conclusion by stating that the Therapeutae found the necessary materials for building their homes in this area (*La Solitude*, 351).
- 38 *Cont. Life* 25.
- 39 *Ibid.* 28.
- 40 Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History* (Harmondsworth, UK: Penguin, 1965), 2.16–17. David T. Runia assesses Eusebius’ dependence on Philo for his reading of the early Christian ascetics in Alexandria in *Philo in Early Christian Literature* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993), 214–231. Runia also considers how Eusebius’s misreading of Philo was transmitted through later Christian authors such as Epiphanius (315–403) and Sozomen (400–460).
- 41 *Life of Antony* 8.2.
- 42 Brakke, *Demons and the Making of the Monk*, 22.
- 43 *Lausiaca History* 18:6.
- 44 A. P. Poemen 202.
- 45 The Sahidic Coptic manuscript is M 633 and is a tenth-century copy. Edited text with an Italian translation is Tito Orlandi, *Vite dei Monachi Phif e Longino* (Milan: Cisalpino-Goliardica, 1975).
- 46 *Life of Phib* 9. Trans. Vivian, 566.
- 47 della Dora, *Landscape, Nature, and the Sacred in Byzantium*, 126.
- 48 *Conferences* 9:12.
- 49 John Chrysostom, *A Comparison between a King and a Monk/Against the Opponents of the Monastic Life*, trans. with an introduction by David G. Hunter (Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen Press, 1988), 73.
- 50 *History of the Monks of Egypt*, Prol. 10.
- 51 *Ibid.*
- 52 *Ibid.*
- 53 Émile Amélineau, *Histoire des Monastères de la Basse-Egypte, vies des Saints Paul, Antoine, Macaire, Maxime et Domèce, Jean le Nain* (Paris: Leroux, 1894).
- 54 *Life of Antony* 14.7. Derwas J. Chitty used this passage as the title for his classic introduction to monasticism, *The Desert a City* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1995).
- 55 Dag Øistein Endsjø, *Primordial Landscapes, Incorruptible Bodies: Desert Asceticism and the Christian Appropriation of Greek Ideas on Geography, Bodies, and Immortality* (New York: Peter Lang, 2008), 55.
- 56 Joseph P. Amar, trans., “On Hermits and Desert Dwellers,” in *Ascetic Behavior in Greco-Roman Antiquity: A Sourcebook*, edited by Vincent L. Wimbush (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1990), 72.
- 57 For a thorough review of the historiography of early Egyptian monasticism and the shift in scholarly approach to the literary sources, see Mark Sheridan, *From the Nile to the Rhone and Beyond: Studies in Early Monastic Literature and Scriptural Interpretation* (Rome: Pontificio Ateneo Sant’Anselmo, 2012); idem, “The Spiritual and Intellectual World of Early Egyptian Monasticism,” *Coptica* 1 (2002): 1–51; Samuel Rubenson, *The Letters of St. Antony: Monasticism and the Making of a Saint* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1995), 126–162; idem, “To Tell the Truth: Fact and Fiction

- in Early Monastic Source,” *Cistercian Studies Quarterly* 48.3 (2013): 317–324.
- 58 Many scholars have scrutinized the literary sources to illustrate the untenable nature of the accounts for writing a history of the fourth century. In the case of the *Sayings of the Desert Fathers*, as one example, the stories were later compiled and produced in Palestine in the sixth century. For a discussion of the *Sayings*, see Goehring, “The Dark Side of Landscape,” 437–451. For the *Life of Antony* as a source for the history of Antony’s life, see David Brakke, *Athanasius and Asceticism* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998), 201–265; Samuel Rubenson, “Christian Asceticism and the Emergence of the Monastic Tradition,” in *Asceticism*, 49–57.
- 59 Evagrius lived at Kellia from 382 until his death in 399. Jerome, in his tour of the eastern Mediterranean sites, likely visited Egypt in 385. Palladius and John Cassian both spent about ten years touring and living in monastic communities. The writings of these four men, in addition to the Coptic *Life of Evagrius*, offer the oral traditions of a community’s founding as they were told it as visitors to the community.
- 60 *Lausiac History* Prologue 5.
- 61 Ibid. Prologue 2.
- 62 Cassian, *Conferences*, Preface.
- 63 For example, Palladius lived at Kellia for nine years, and yet his history recounts little about the founding tradition of the community. He is more attentive to recounting the lessons he learned in working with living monks such as Macarius of Alexandria and Evagrius, rather than offering a detailed historical account of monasticism and the actual landscape. See *Lausiac History*, 18, 38.
- 64 Howell G. M. Edwards et al., “Raman Spectroscopy of Natron: Shedding Light on Ancient Egyptian Mummification,” *Analytical and Bioanalytical Chemistry* 388.3 (2007): 683–689.
- 65 Owing to the intensive agricultural reclamation of the desert, it is difficult to ascertain the presence of all monastic settlements. However, using Dayr al-Baramus in the north and Dayr Anba Makar in the south as the farthest extents of Sketis and using the visible archaeological sites as guides, the estimate is an area of about 8,400 square kilometers.
- 66 Goehring, “The Dark Side of Landscape,” 437–451; idem, “The Encroaching Desert,” 281–296.
- 67 For the exported tradition of Macarius as the founder of the area, see *Lausiac History* 17; Sozomen, *Ecclesiastical History* 3.14; and Cassian, *Conferences* 15.3.1. In an eighth-century vita of John the Little, the author identifies Sketis as home of Macarius’s descendants. The translation for this is *The Holy Workshop of Virtue: The Life of John the Little by Zacharias of Sakhā*, eds. Maged A. Mikhail and Tim Vivian (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2010).
- 68 See B. Flusin, “Le moine et le lieu: Récits de fondation à Scété et dans le monde des Apophtegmes,” in *Saints Orientaux*, ed. D. Aigle (Paris: De Boccard, 1995), 117–139.
- 69 David Brakke, “Macarius’s Quest and Ours: Literary Sources for Early Egyptian Monasticism,” *Cistercian Studies Quarterly* 48.2 (2013): 239.
- 70 Brakke, “Macarius’s Quest and Ours,” 240.
- 71 AP Macarius 1.
- 72 For the historical context on Palladius and his writing of the *Lausiac History*, see Demetrios S. Katos, *Palladius of Helenopolis: The Origenist Advocate* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011).
- 73 *Lausiac History* 17.2.
- 74 Ibid. 17.10.
- 75 Ibid. 17.3, 18.4, 18.10, and 23.1.
- 76 Cassian, *Conferences*. 1:1.
- 77 *Lausiac History* 17.3. Coptic *Life of Macarius* 3. The Coptic *Life of Macarius the Great* makes the distinction that the second disciple lived in an enclosed space.
- 78 Coptic *Life of Macarius* 3, 4.
- 79 Evelyn White, *Monasteries of Wadi ‘n Natrân*, II:361–363.
- 80 *History of the Monks of Egypt* 23:1, trans. Ward, 113.
- 81 AP Macarius the Great 3.
- 82 Tim Vivian, *Saint Macarius the Spiritbearer: Coptic Texts Relating to Saint Macarius the Great* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 2004).
- 83 *Life of Macarius of Scetis* 7.
- 84 Oracular revelations often happened at specific locations and could involve incubation at particular shrines. While visions and oracular revelations both carry the power of divine directives, the Christianization of visions was considered completely authoritative. Patricia Cox Miller, *Dreams in Late Antiquity: Studies in the Imagination of a Culture* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1994);

- Polymnia Athanassiadi, “Philosophers and Oracles: Shifts in Authority in Late Paganism,” *Byzantion* 62 (1992): 45–62; A. Busine, *Paroles d’Apollon: Pratiques et traditions oraculaires dans l’Antiquité tardive* (Leiden: Brill, 2005); Leslie S. B. MacCoull, “Dreams, Visions and Incubation in Coptic Egypt,” *Orientalia Louvaniensia Periodica* 22 (1991): 123–128.
- 85 *Life of Macarius of Scetis* 8, trans. 158–159.
- 86 *Ibid.* 15.
- 87 *Ibid.* 16.
- 88 Catherine Hezser, *Jewish Travel in Antiquity* (Tübingen, Germany: Mohr Siebeck, 2011), 84; Lionel Casson, *Travel in the Ancient World* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1994), 176–196.
- 89 *Life of Macarius of Scetis* 16, trans. 170.
- 90 *Ibid.*
- 91 *Ibid.* 18, trans. 173–174.
- 92 *Ibid.* 20, trans. 177.
- 93 *Ibid.* 18, trans. 173.
- 94 According to the *Life* 23, the monks worked together to dig a well to serve the community and provided additional cisterns for holding water. In one case Macarius was thrown by demons into the well and they tried to bury him. The well represents the permanent nature of the settlements that Macarius has put into place and further indicates that the demons are being replaced by monastics in the desert.
- 95 *Life of Macarius of Scetis* 22, trans. 179.
- 96 *Ibid.*
- 97 Later the text makes reference to Sketis as the holy mountain of Abba Makari. See “Odes to Saints of Scetis,” in *Wādī an Natrān* I: 136.
- 98 English translation is Abū al-Makārim, *The Churches and Monasteries of Egypt and Some Neighboring Countries Attributed to Abu Salih the Armenian*, ed. and trans. B. T. A. Evetts, with added notes by A. J. Butler (Oxford: Anecdota Oxoniensia, 1895; reprint Oxford, 1969; and Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press, 2001). Arabic text is Samū’īl al-Suyrānī, ed. *Tārīkh al-kanā’is wa-l-adyara* (Cairo: Dayr al-Suryan, 1984). A second publication in 2000 included an expansion of four volumes under the title of *Tārīkh Abū al-Makārim* (Cairo: Dayr al-Suryan, 2000); and a later English translation is Abu al-Makarem, *History of the Churches and Monasteries in Lower Egypt in the 13th Century*, trans. Anba Samuel, Bishop of Shibin al-Qanatir (Cairo: Institute of Coptic Studies, Anba Reweis, 1992). For a discussion of how scholars identified Abū al-Makārim as one of the authors of the text in addition to Abu Šāliḥ’s role, see Clara Ten Hacken, “The Description of Antioch in Abū al-Makārim’s *History of the Churches and Monasteries of Egypt and Some Neighbouring Countries*,” in *East and West in the Medieval Eastern Mediterranean I*, eds. Krijina Nelly Ciggaar and David Michael Metcalf (Leuven, Belgium: Peeters, 2006), 185–216; Johannes den Heijer, “The Composition of the *History of the Churches and Monasteries of Egypt*: Some Preliminary Remarks,” in *Acts of the Fifth International Congress of Coptic Studies, Washington, 12–15 August 1992*, II.1 (Rome: 1993), 209–219; Johannes den Heijer, “The Composition of the History of the Churches and Monasteries of Egypt,” in *Acts of the Fifth International Congress of Coptic Studies*, ed. Tito Orlandi (Roma: CIM, 1993), 209–219; idem, “Coptic Historiography in the Fatimid, Ayyubid, and early Mamluk period,” *Medieval Encounters* 2.1 (1996): 67–98.
- 99 Maqrīzī, 315.
- 100 *Ibid.*, section 66, 320.
- 101 *Ibid.*
- 102 Mikhail and Vivian, *The Holy Workshop of Virtue*, n. 41.
- 103 Judith Adler, “Cultivating Wilderness: Environmentalism and Legacies of Early Christian Asceticism,” *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 48 (2006): 4–37.
- 104 Evelyn White, *Monasteries of Wādī ‘n Natrān*, II:17–24.
- 105 The site is about 64 kilometers southeast of Alexandria.
- 106 *Lausiaca* History 7.1, 7.6.
- 107 *Ibid.* 8.5.
- 108 Coptic, *Life of Antony* 60. Trans., Vivian and Athanassakis, 184.
- 109 *Hist. Mon.* 22.1.
- 110 *Hist. Mon.* 20.1 includes a reflection on the importance of the site for the cleansing of sins, akin to the actual niter that was used in the cleaning of linen.
- 111 Some of the famous fathers found in the *Sayings* resided at Nitria including Or, Pambo, Arsenius, Ammonius, and Benjamin.
- 112 *AP Antony* 34. Note that the story of the founding of Kellia is embedded in a story about Antony and not in the *Sayings* attributed to Amoun. Other vitae of Amoun

- include Socrates, *Hist. Eccl.*, 4.23; Sozomen, *Hist. Eccl.*, 1.14.
- 113 AP Antony 34.
- 114 Casson, *Travel in the Ancient World*, 189, 315. Casson reports that an average distance of 17 miles per day was common if one traveled by foot.
- 115 F. Klejna, "Antonius und Ammonas. Eine Untersuchung über Herkunft und Eigenart der ältesten Mönchsbriefe," *Zeitschrift für Theologie* 62.3 (1983): 309–348.
- 116 A. Guillaumont, "Histoire des moines aux Kellia," *Orientalia Lovaniensia Periodica* 8 (1977): 187–203.
- 117 *History of the Monks of Egypt*, 22.21–24.
- 118 Ibid.
- 119 The research on Pachomius and Pachomian monasticism is vast. He appears in a variety of travel accounts and early histories see Cassian, *Institutes*, 4.1; Palladius, *Lausiac History*, 7.6, 32; and Sozomen, *Ecclesiastical History*, 3.14. Philip Rousseau, *Pachomius: The Making of a Community in Fourth Century Egypt* (Berkeley: University of California, 1999); R. Draguet, "Le chapitre e l'Histoire Lausiacque sur les Tabennésotes derive-t-il d'une source copte?" *Muséon* 57 (1944): 53–145; idem, "Le chapitre e l'Histoire Lausiacque sur les Tabennésotes derive-t-il d'une source copte?" *Muséon* 58 (1945): 15–95; Gawdat Gabra and Hany N. Takla, eds. *Christianity and Monasticism in Upper Egypt*, 2 (Cairo: American University in Cairo Press, 2010); James E. Goehring, "Withdrawing from the Desert: Pachomius and the Development of Village Monasticism in Upper Egypt," *Harvard Theological Review* 89.3 (1996): 267–285; A. Guillaumont, *Aux origines du monachisme chrétien: Pur une phénoménologie du monachisme* (Mauges, France: Abbaye de Bellefontaine, 1979).
- 120 James Goehring, "The Origins of Monasticism," in *Ascetics, Society and the Desert*, 28–29.
- 121 Rousseau, *Pachomius*, 65.
- 122 See James Goehring, "The Fourth Letter of Horsiesius and the Situation in the Pachomian Community following the Death of Theodore," in *Ascetics, Society, and the Desert: Studies in Early Egyptian Monasticism* (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International), 222; Rousseau, *Pachomius*, xvii.
- 123 Goehring, *Withdrawing from the Desert*, 270.
- 124 Marvin W. Meyer, "Wadi Sheikh Ali Survey," *GM* 64 (1983): 77–82.
- 125 The first early exploration for the settlements of Pachomius is the report by Louis-Théophile Lefort, "Les premiers monastères pachômiens: Exploration topographique," *Le Muséon* 52 (1939): 379–407. For more on the twentieth-century archaeological study of the church excavations at Faw Qibli, see CE "Pbow: Archaeology," 1927–1929; James Goehring, "New Frontiers in Pachomian Studies," in *Ascetics, Society and the Desert*, 179–186. For more on the excavation of the church, see Peter Grossmann, "Report on the Excavation in Faw-Qibli-Season 1986," *International Association of Coptic Studies Newsletter* 20 (1987): 5–8; Gary Lease, "Traces of Early Egyptian Monasticism: The Faw Qibli Excavations," *Occasional Papers* 22 (Claremont, CA: The Institute for Antiquity and Christianity, 1991); Bastiaan Van Elderen and James M. Robinson, "The Second Season of the Nag Hammadi Excavation 22 November–29 December 1976," *GM* 24 (1977): 57–73; idem, "The Second Season of the Nag Hammadi Excavations 22 November–29 December 1976," *American Research Centre in Egypt Newsletter* 99/100 (1977): 36–54; Peter Grossmann, "The Basilica of St. Pachomius," *BA* 42 (1979): 232–236; Peter Grossmann and Gary Lease, "Faw Qibli – 1989 Excavation Report," *GM* 114 (1990): 9–12; Peter Grossmann, "Pbow: Archaeology," in CE 6:1927–1929; Robinson, *The Nag Hammadi Story*, 1101–1148.
- 126 Fernand Debono, "La basilique et le monastère de St. Pachôme (Fouilles de l'Institut Pontifical d'Archéologie Chrétienne à Faou-el-Qibli, Haute-Égypte – janvier 1968)," *BIFAO* 70 (1971): 191–220.
- 127 Rousseau succinctly summarizes the difficulties of reconstructing a historical narrative from the *Lives* available: "[T]he chronology is based on a far from simple conflation of texts in different languages, which contradict each other in more than their account of events" (*Pachomius*, 61). My discussion here is to look primarily at the Boharic tradition, as it offers the most developed spatial history for the purposes of this analysis. When appropriate, I will include passages from the other traditions. For the Coptic texts, see L. Lefort, ed. and trans., *Sancti Pachomii vita bohairice scripta* (Louvain: L. Durbecq, 1953). For the Greek *Prima Vita* (G'), see André-Jean Festugière, *La Première Vie grecque de saint Pachôme, introduction critique et*

- traduction (Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 1965). For the Arabic life (Ar) and a French translation, see E. Amélineau, *Vie de Pakhôme* (Paris: E. Leroux, 1889). An English translation of the most substantial Coptic and Greek *Lives* is *Pachomian Koinonia: The Life of Saint Pachomius and His Disciples*, vol. 1, trans. Armand Veilleux (Kalamazoo, MI: Cistercian Publications, 1980).
- 128 Boharic *Life* 8, Greek *Prima Vita* 5b.
- 129 Boharic *Life* 8, 51. The location may have been the most appropriate place for Pachomius to pray, as it was linked with the very materials needed for constructing a residence. Veilleux explains that the name was misread for a long time as the “place of Serapis” because the Boharic translator misread the name.
- 130 The audience, upon hearing of Pachomius’s agricultural efforts, would know he had planned to stay in the area for several years. For historical and archaeological discussions of date crops, see Holly Chase, “The Date Palm: Pillar of Society,” in *Oxford Symposium on Food & Cookery 1989: Staple Foods: Proceedings*, ed. Harlan Walker (London: Prospect Books, 1990), 64–69; R. al-Yahyai and A. Manickavasagan, “An Overview of Date Palm Production,” in *Dates: Production, Processing, Food, and Medicinal Values*, ed. A. Manickavasagan, M. Mohamed Essay and E. Sukumar (Boca Raton, FL: CRC Press, 2012), 3–12; Paul Popenoe, “The Date–Palm in Antiquity,” *The Scientific Monthly* 19.3 (1924): 313–325.
- 131 Boharic *Life* 8. Trans. Veilleux, 28.
- 132 For a discussion of Pachomius’s medical services, see Andrew Crislip, *Thorns in the Flesh: Illness and Sanctity in Late Antique Christianity* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2012), 111–114.
- 133 Boharic *Life* 10.
- 134 Ibid. 14.
- 135 Ibid. 10.
- 136 Ibid. 15.
- 137 Ibid. 12.
- 138 Boharic *Life* 17, G¹ 12, trans. Veilleux, 39.
- 139 Greek *Prima Vita* 11, trans. Veilleux, 304.
- 140 Ibid. 12, trans. Veilleux, 305.
- 141 Sahidic *Life* 6.
- 142 Boharic *Life* 17.
- 143 See Ewa Wipszycka, “Le monachisme égyptien et les villes,” *Travaux et mémoires* 12 (1994): 1–44.
- 144 Boharic *Life* 18. This is a pattern that reoccurs throughout monastic literature as a form of commemoration of the monk and his dwelling.
- 145 Boharic *Life* 19, trans. Veilleux, 42.
- 146 Sahidic *Life* 9.
- 147 The account also recalls the mud that Pachomius produced while praying in the tombs on the outskirts of Šeneset.
- 148 For a discussion of what we can discern about the women in Pachomius’s *koinonia*, see Susanna Elm, *Virgins of God*, 289–296.
- 149 Greek *Prima Vita* 55.
- 150 Goehring makes the point that it is most likely an issue of decline in population in the village, *Withdrawing from the Desert*, 275.
- 151 Boharic *Life* 49, Greek *Prima Vita* 54a, trans. Veilleux, 71.
- 152 Ibid. Note the location is correct in its placement north and downriver from Tabennesi. The author of the Boharic *Life* locates the place in terms of its relative navigational location relative to Tabennesi.
- 153 Goehring, *Withdrawing from the Desert*, 275.
- 154 Boharic *Life* 49.
- 155 Boharic *Life* 50, Greek *Prima Vita* 54b.
- 156 Boharic *Life* 51; Greek *Prima Vita* 54c.
- 157 Zbigniew Borkowski, *Une description topographique des immeubles à Panopolis*. Trans. Zsolt Kiss (Warsaw: Panstwowe Wydawn, Naukowe, 1975).
- 158 Boharic *Life* 54; Greek *Prima Vita* 81a; trans. Veilleux, 74.
- 159 Boharic *Life* 54 only.
- 160 Boharic *Life* 54; trans. Veilleux, 74.
- 161 Boharic *Life* 56; Greek *Prima Vita* 80.
- 162 Boharic *Life* 57, 58; Greek *Prima Vita* 81, 83.
- 163 Boharic *Life* 57; trans. Veilleux, 77.
- 164 Boharic *Life* 58.
- 165 Boharic *Life* 58; trans. Veilleux, 78.
- 166 Boharic *Life* 8.
- 167 *History of the Monks of Egypt* 8.
- 168 Ibid. 8.2.
- 169 Norman Russell, in his notes for the *History of the Monks of Egypt*, suggests that Clédat had found a coenobium (130).
- 170 *History of the Monks of Egypt* 8.3.
- 171 *History of the Monks of Egypt* 8.5. Caves were not always the dwellings of monks, but could function as day cells. Pachomius, for example, had his own cell, but preferred to spend some time outside his cell in the caves. Alexander Badawy, “Les premiers établissements chrétiens dans les anciennes tombes d’Égypte,” *Publications de l’Institut d’Études Orientales de la Bibliothèque Patriarcale d’Alexandrie* 2 (1953): 67–89.

- 172 *History of the Monks of Egypt* 8.8.
- 173 *Ibid.* 8.18.
- 174 See the parallel attraction to Antony and his residence. The community at St. Antony's Monastery by the Red Sea consisted initially of Antony's dwelling with his companions and later a small community of novices.
- 175 Clackson, *It Is Our Father Who Writes*, 5–7.
- 176 R. G. Coquin, "Apollon de Titkooh ou/et Apollon de Bawit?" *Orientalia* 46 (1977): 435–446.
- 177 *Life of Phib* 4.
- 178 *Ibid.* 2, trans. Vivian, 563.
- 179 Vivian, "Monks, Middle Egypt, and Metanoia," n. 65.
- 180 *Life of Phib* 5, trans. 564.
- 181 2 Maccabees is preserved in Sahidic Coptic; see E. S. Meltzer & H.-G. Bethge, "The Jewish Martyrs (2 Maccabees 5:27–7:41)," in *The Crosby-Schoyen Codex Ms 193 in the Schoyen Collection*, ed. James E. Goehring (Leuven, Belgium: Peeters, 1990), 81–133.
- 182 *Life of Phib* 9, trans. 566.
- 183 *Ibid.*
- 184 *Ibid.* 11, trans. 567.
- 185 *Ibid.*
- 186 *Ibid.* spatial12, trans. 568.
- 187 *Ibid.* 14, trans. 569.
- 188 Stephen Emmel, "From the Other Side of the Nile: Shenoute and Panopolis," in *Perspectives on Panopolis: An Egyptian Town from Alexander the Great to the Arab Conquest*, eds. A. Egberts, B. P. Muhs, and J. van der Vliet (Leiden: Brill, 2002), 95–113. For the results of the late antique excavations at Akhmim, see Shelia McNally and Ivancica Dvorzak Schrunck, *Excavations in Akhmim, Egypt: Continuity and Change in City Life from Late Antiquity to the Present* (Oxford: Tempus Reparatum, 1993).
- 189 For a discussion of the women's history, see Kraweic, *Shenoute and the Women of the White Monastery*, 31–50; Stephen Emmel, "Shenoute of Atripe and the Christian Destruction of Temples in Egypt: Rhetoric and Reality," in *From Temple to Church*, 161–202; Peter Grossmann, *Christliche Architektur in Ägypten*, 334–388. For recent archaeological and documentation efforts at Atripe see the Yale Monastic Archaeology Project–South egyptology.yale.edu/expeditions/current-expeditions/yale-monastic-archaeology-project-south-sohag/atripe (Accessed May 25, 2017).
- 190 The community is also referenced as the White Monastery, Dayr al-Abyiad, in reference to the massive white limestone walls of the Late Antique church at the site. The founder of the community was Pjol, Shenoute's uncle. Pjol was followed by Ebonh, a leader whose style of discipline and governance was a point of contention for Shenoute.
- 191 In addition to the monasteries to the west of Sohag, Akhmin is known today for its impressive array of medieval monasteries on the east bank of the Nile, such as the Monastery of the Martyrs and of St. George. Scant archaeological evidence exists on the east bank for contemporary settlements of the fifth century.
- 192 David Frankfurter, *Religion in Roman Egypt: Assimilation and Resistance* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1998), 63–65.
- 193 Yahia al-Masry, "More Recent Excavations at Athribis in Upper Egypt," *MDAIK* 57 (2000): 205–218.
- 194 W. M. Flinders Petrie, "Athribis," *British School of Archaeology* 14 (1908): 13–15.
- 195 Besa, *Life of Shenoute*, 8. Text is Johannes Leipoldt, *Sinuthii archimandritae vita et opera omnia: Sinuthii vita bohairic* (Louvain: Imprimerie nationale, 1906). English translation is David N. Bell, *The Life of Shenoute by Besa* (Kalamazoo, MI: Cistercian, 1983). For a discussion of authorship of the text, see Nina Lubomierski, "The Coptic Life of Shenoute," in *Christianity and Monasticism in Upper Egypt*, vol. 1: *Akhmim and Sohag*, 91–98; idem, *Die Vita Sinuthii* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck 2007); idem, "The 'Vita Sinuthii' (The Life of Shenoute): Panegyric or Bibliography?" in *Studia Patristica*, vol. 39. *Paper Presented at the Fourteenth International Conference on Patristic Studies held in Oxford 2003*, eds. Frances Young, Margaret Edwards, and P. Paris (Leuven, Belgium: Peeters, 2006), 417–421.
- 196 The structural and architectural history of the church is currently the subject of an on-site project, "White Monastery Church Documentation Project," directed by Bentley Layton, Yale University, and under the auspices of the Yale Monastic Archaeology Project, executive director Stephen J. Davis. For reports, see egyptology.yale.edu/current-expeditions/yale-monastic-archaeology-project-south-sohag/white-monastery/church-of-shenoute (accessed May 25, 2017). See also Grossmann, *Christliche Architektur in Ägypten*,

- 528–536; idem, “Zur Stiftung und Bauzeit der großen Kirche des Schenuteklosters bei Sühāg (Oberägypten),” *ByzZ* 101 (2002): 35–54; Ugo Monneret de Villard, *Les couvents près de Sohag* (Milan: Tip. Pontificia Arcivescovile S. Giuseppe, 1925–1926).
- 197 Grossmann, *Christliche Architektur in Ägypten*, 529.
- 198 According to the *Paralipomena*, Pachomius deliberately marred the beauty of the church at Pbow, for he took too much pleasure in its perfection. This is likely a later etiological account to explain why the walls of the church are not squared. See *Paralipomena* 32; François Halkin, *Sancti Pachomii vitae Gracecae* (Brussels: Société des Bollandistes, 1932), 157–158; Veilleux, *Pachomian Koinonia II*: 55–56.
- 199 For the pharaonic spolia used in the church construction, see Klotz, “Triphis in the White Monastery,” 197–213; idem, “The Naos of Nectanebo I from the White Monastery Church (Sohag),” 37–52. A history of the early twentieth century restoration of the church is Cedric Meurice, “L’intervention du Comité de conservation des monuments de l’art arabe au Couvent Blanc de Sohag,” in *Études coptes XI: Treizième journée d’études, Marseille, 7–9 juin 2007*, eds. A. Boud’hors and C. Louis (Paris: De Boccard, 2010), 277–288.
- 200 Hans-Georg Severin, “On the Architectural Decoration and Dating of the Church of Dayr Anbā Bīšūy (“Red Monastery”) Near Sühāg in Upper Egypt,” *DOP* 62 (2008): 75–112.
- 201 The church at al-Dayr al-Ahmar, the Red Monastery, is the most important church monument in Egypt from Late Antiquity. A video of the interior of the church and an introduction to the monument was produced by the Metropolitan Museum of Art in conjunction with the museum’s 2012 exhibition, “Byzantium and Islam: Age of Transition,” narrated by Elizabeth S. Bolman www.youtube.com/watch?v=VT7TDxZ9NpY (Accessed May 25, 2017). See Bolman, ed., *The Red Monastery Church*. Several preliminary presentations of the results of the work are available; see Elizabeth S. Bolman, “Late Antique Aesthetics, Chromophobia and the Red Monastery, Sohag, Egypt,” *Early Christian Art* 3 (2006): 1–24; idem, “Reflections on the Red Monastery Project: 2000–2008,” *BARCE* 194 (Winter 2009): 9–13. For a comparison of the churches at Dayr al-Ahmar and Dayr al-Abiyad, see Dale Kinney, “The Triconch Sanctuaries of Sohag,” in *Christianity and Monasticism in Upper Egypt*, vol. 1, 239–252.
- 202 Schroeder, *Monastic Bodies*, 100.
- 203 Ariel G. López, *Shenoute of Atripe and the Uses of Poverty: Rural Patronage, Religious Conflict, and Monasticism in Late Antique Egypt* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2013), 47–51.
- 204 López, *Shenoute of Atripe*, 50.
- 205 For the Yale Monastic Archaeology Project-South at the White Monastery see egyptology.yale.edu/expeditions/current-expeditions/yale-monastic-archaeology-project-south-sohag/white-monastery (Accessed May 25, 2017). For published reports see Louise Blanke, “The Archaeology of Egyptian Monasticism: Settlement, economy, and Daily Life of the White Monastery Federation” (Ph.D. diss., University of Copenhagen, 2015); Bolman, “Shenoute and a Recently Discovered Tomb,” 453–462; Brooks Hedstrom et al., “The White Monastery Federation Project,” 333–364; Darlene Brooks Hedstrom, “An Archaeological Mission for the White Monastery,” *Coptica* 4 (2005): 1–26; Stephen J. Davis et al., “Archaeology at the White Monastery, 2005–2010,” *Coptica* 9 (2010): 25–58; Peter Grossmann, Darlene Brooks Hedstrom, and Mohamad Abdal-Rassul, with an appendix by E. Bolman, “The Excavation in the Monastery of Apa Shenute (Dayr Anba Shinuda) at Suhag: Appendix on Documentary Photography at the Monasteries of Anba Shinuda and Anba Bishoi, Suhag,” *DOP* 58 (2004): 371–382; Peter Grossmann, Darlene Brooks Hedstrom, and Saad Mohamad M. Osman, with a contribution by H.-C. Noeske in collaboration with M. A. Abd al-Rahim, T. S. Abd al-Fatah, and M. Abd al-Mugdi, “Second Report on the Excavation of the Monastery of Apa Shenute (Dayr Anba Shinuda) at Suhag,” *DOP* 63 (2009): 167–220.
- Stephen Davis with Elizabeth Bolman, Darlene Brooks Hedstrom, and Gillian Pyke, “Life and Death in Lower and Upper Egypt: A Brief Survey of Report Recent Monastic Archaeology at Yale,” *JSCS* 3 (2012): 9–26.
- 206 Emmel, “Coptic Literature in the Byzantine and Early Islamic World,” in *Egypt in the Byzantine World*, 90.

- 207 For the codicological reconstruction of Shenoute's works, see Stephen Emmel, *Shenoute's Literary Corpus*, 2 vols., CSCO vols. 599–600 (Leuven, Belgium: Peeters, 2004); Dwight W. Young, *Coptic Manuscripts from the White Monastery: Works of Shenute* (Wien: Brüder Hollinek, 1993).
- 208 Heike Behlmer, *Shenute von Atripe, De iudicio* (Torino, Museo Egizio, Cat. 63000, Cod. IV) (Turin, Ministero per I Beni Culturali e Ambientali Soprintendenza al Museo delle Antichità Egizie, 1996); David Brakke, "Shenoute, Weber, and the Monastic Prophet: Ancient and Modern Articulations of Ascetic Authority," in *Foundations of Power and Conflicts of Authority in Late-Antique Monasticism: Proceedings of the International Seminar, Turin, December 2–4, 2004*, eds. A. Camplani and G. Filoramo (Leuven, Belgium: Peeters, 2007), 47–74; Janet Timbie, "The State of Research on the Career of Shenoute of Atripe in 2004," *Coptica* 4 (2005): 52–74.
- 209 New publications of Shenoute's works include Heike Belmer, "Schenute, Besa und Lagarde: eine unbekannte Episode der Forschungsgeschichte," *Journal Coptic Studies* 5 (2003): 69–78; idem, "Visitors to Shenoute's Monastery," in *Pilgrimage and Holy Space in Late Antique Egypt*, 341–371; Andrew Crislip, "Sickness and Health in the Monasteries of Pachomius and Shenoute," in *Coptic Studies on the Threshold of a New Millennium*, vol. 2, eds. Mat Immerzeel and J. van der Vliet (Leuven, Belgium: Peeters, 2004), 867–876; David Frankfurter, "Things Unbefitting Christians: Violence and Christianization in Fifth-Century Panopolis," *J ECS* 8 (2000): 273–295; Rebecca Krawiec, "From the Womb of the Church: Monastic Families," *J ECS* 11 (2003): 283–307; Bentley Layton, "Social Structure and Food Consumption in an Early Christian Monastery," 25–55; idem, "Rules, Patterns, and the Exercise of Power in Shenoute's Monastery: The Problem of World Replacement and Identity Maintenance," *J ECS* 15 (2007): 45–73; idem, "Some Observations on Shenoute's Sources: Who Are Our Fathers?" *JCS* 11 (2009): 45–59; Caroline Schroeder, "Prophecy and Porneia in Shenoute's Letters: The Rhetoric of Sexuality in a Late Antique Egyptian Monastery," *JNES* 65 (2006): 81–97; Janet Timbie and Jason Zaborowski, "Shenoute's Sermon The Lord Thundered: An Introduction and Translation," *Oriens Christianus* 90 (2006): 91–123.
- 210 See K. H. Kuhn, "A Fifth-Century Egyptian Abbott" *Journal of Theological Studies* 5.2 (1954): 36–48; 174–187 and 6 (1955): 35–48.
- 211 Emmel, *Corpus*, II.937–938.
- 212 Fragments of the Sahidic *Life of Shenoute* exist, but the complete Coptic manuscript is written in Boharic.
- 213 Stephen Emmel, "Shenoute's Place in the History of Monasticism," in *Christianity and Monasticism in Upper Egypt*, vol. 1: *Akhmim and Sohag*, eds. Gawdat Gabra and Hany N. Takla (Cairo and New York: The American University in Cairo Press), 31–46.
- 214 Stephen Emmel, "The Historical Circumstances of Shenoute's Sermon 'God is Blessed,'" in *ΘΕΜΕΛΙΑ: Spätantike und koptologische Studien; Peter Grossmann zum 65. Geburtstag*, ed. Martin Krause and S. Schaten (Wiesbaden: Reichert Verlag, 1998), 81–95.
- 215 Emmel, "The Other Side of the Nile," 96; idem, *Corpus*, 2:564.
- 216 After Pjöl, Ebonh ruled the community before Shenoute assumed leadership. See Emmel, "Shenoute the Monk," 156–157.
- 217 Schroeder offers a nuanced reading of the first two letters in Canon 1 to demonstrate effectively how to glean the social context from the fragments of the letters. See Schroeder, *Monastic Bodies*, 30–39.
- 218 Following Emmel's codicological reconstruction for *Canon 1* see Emmel, *Corpus*, 1:125–145; 2:558–565 and 700–706.
- 219 Schroeder, *Monastic Bodies*, 91.
- 220 Shenoute, *Canon 1*, YW 88–89, trans. Lopez, *Shenoute of Atripe*, 51.
- 221 For a discussion of the different types of gifts and its impact on the community's financial standing, see López, *Shenoute of Atripe*, 63–72.
- 222 Shenoute, *This Great House*, Canon 7, XL 273–274, unpublished (FR–BN 130⁴ ff. 139V–140R). See Emmel, *Corpus*, 582–583 for a discussion of the five sermons entitled: *God Is Holy*, *Acephalous Work Number Twenty-Three*, *This Great House, I Myself Have Seen*, and *If Everyone Errs*.
- 223 Shenoute, *This Great House*, XL 273–274. See Emmel, "Historical Circumstances," 83.
- 224 Emmel, "Historical Circumstances," 82–83.
- 225 See Shenoute, *God Is Holy*, Canon 7, GO 25, trans. Schroeder, *Monastic Bodies*, 100; *God Is Holy*, Canon 7, GO 52, in Amélineau, *Oeuvres*,

- 2:1; *God Is Holy*, Canon 7, XU, 1 in Wessely, *Texte*, 1:97.
- 226 Shenoute, *I Myself Have Seen*, Canon 7, DG 336 in Leipoldt, *Opera Omnia*, 3:209.
- 227 Shenoute, *I Myself Have Seen*, Canon 7, DG 343, in Leipoldt, *Opera Omnia*, 3:214, trans. Schroeder, *Monastic Bodies*, 107. Similar deserted and desert language is found in “On Individual Responsibility for Sins” (Frag. 36, p. 119), a fragment now attributed to Shenoute. The relevant passage reads: “But if you yourselves will not dwell in ruined and abandoned places where there are wild beasts, and where foxes, snakes, and scorpions breed, and where swine feed, then how shall the Spirit of Christ dwell in your ruined souls and your destroyed hearts and your bodies which are lairs of unclean spirits?” trans. Kuhn, *Letters and Sermons of Besa*, 115.
- 228 Shenoute, *God Is Holy*, Canon 7, XU 94 in Amélieneau, *Oeuvres*, 2:148–149, trans. Schroeder, *Monastic Bodies*, 110.
- 229 Besa, *On Theft and Deceitful Behavior*, p. 63, trans. Kuhn, *Letters and Sermons of Besa*, 61.
- 230 Luomierski, “The *Vita Sinuthii*,” 417–418.
- 231 *Life of Shenoute*, 8, trans. Bell, 44.
- 232 *Ibid.* 9, trans. Bell, 44.
- 233 *Ibid.* 24, trans. Bell, 49–50.
- 234 *Ibid.* 30, trans. Bell, 51.
- 235 *Life of Shenoute* 30, trans. Bell, 51. For the story of Antony and his encounter with a silver dish and gold nuggets, see *Life of Antony* 11, 12.
- 236 Bell notes that the Coptic is unclear as to whether the object holds gold or whether it was a container with some valuable material.
- 237 *Life of Shenoute* 32, trans. Bell, 52.
- 238 James E. Goehring, “Introduction,” in *Politics, Monasticism, and Miracles in Sixth Century Upper Egypt: A Critical Edition and Translation of the Coptic Texts on Abraham of Farshut* (Tübingen, Germany: Mohr Siebeck, 2012), 1. The critical edition includes three sources found within two tenth-/eleventh-century codices from Shenoute’s library at the White Monastery. The three texts are *A Panegyric on Abraham of Farshut*, *On Abraham of Farshut*, and *Excerpt on Abraham of Farshut*. For an introduction to the theological and social conflict of the sixth century as represented in the hagiography of Abraham of Farshut, see James Goehring, “Remembering Abraham of Farshut: History, Hagiography, and the Fate of the Pachomian Tradition,” *J ECS* 14 (2006): 1–26. For Justinian’s efforts to quell non-Chalcedonian efforts in Egypt, see Edward R. Hardy, “The Egyptian Policy of Justinian,” *DOP* 22 (1968): 32–36.
- 239 *Panegyric on Abraham of Farshut*, XXI.3. trans. Goehring, 101.
- 240 *Ibid.*, X.2. trans. Goehring, 85.
- 241 Goehring, *Politics, Monasticism, and Miracles*, 47.
- 242 *Panegyric on Abraham of Farshut*, X.3. trans. Goehring, 85.
- 243 *Ibid.*, XXI.2. trans. Goehring, 99.
- 244 *History of the Monks of Egypt* 7.1; trans. Russell, 69.

6 THE ARCHAEOLOGY OF LATE ANTIQUE BUILDINGS IN EGYPT

- 1 *AP Zeno* 1.
- 2 Paolo Davoli, “Amheida 2007–2009: New Results from the Excavations,” in *The Oasis Papers 6: Proceedings of the Sixth International Conference of the Dakhleh Oasis Project*, eds. Roger S. Bagnall, Paola Davoli, and Colin A. Hope (Oxford: Oxbow, 2009), 263–278; Constance S. Silver, “Painted Surfaces on Mud Plaster and Three-Dimensional Mud Elements: The Status of Conservation Treatments and Recommendations for Continuing Research,” in *The Oasis Papers* 6, 337–347; Helen Whitehouse, “Mosaics and Paintings in Graeco-Roman Egypt,” in *A Companion to Ancient Egypt*, ed. A. B. Lloyd (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), 1008–1031; idem, “Vine and Acanthus: Decorative Themes in the Wall-Paintings of Kellis,” in *The Oasis Papers* 6, 381–390.
- 3 Bartuska, “The Built Environment: Definition and Scope,” 5.
- 4 *Ibid.*
- 5 Susan Power Bratton, *Christianity, Wilderness, and Wildlife: The Original Desert Solitaire* (Scranton, PA: University of Scranton Press, 1993); idem, “The Original Desert Solitaire: Early Christian Monasticism and Wilderness,” *Environmental Ethics* 10.1 (1988): 31–53.
- 6 *Ibid.*
- 7 The most vivid cautionary tale of misidentification is from Cappadocia. See Veronica G. Kalas, “Early Explorations of Cappadocia and the Monastic Myth,” *Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies* 28 (2004): 101–119; Robert

- Ousterhout, "Questioning the Architectural Evidence Cappadocian Monasticism," in *Work and Worship at the Theotokos Evergetis*, ed. Margaret Mullett and A. Kirby (Belfast: Belfast Byzantine Texts and Translations, 1997), 420–431.
- 8 Crum, *Coptic Dictionary*, 122a; Cerny, *Coptic Etymological Dictionary*, 64. *Kōt* derives from the Egyptian forms to "turn pottery" and "to build."
 - 9 Crum, *Coptic Dictionary*, 323a, 753b.
 - 10 Ibid., 398a.
 - 11 Kemp, "Soil," 78–103; A. J. Spencer, *Brick Architecture in Ancient Egypt* (Warminster, PA: Aris and Phillips, 1979).
 - 12 Similar wooden molds are used today throughout Egypt for the construction of walls and some homes. Marwa Dabaieh, *A Future for the Past of Desert Vernacular Architecture: Testing a Novel Conservation Model and Applied Methodology in the Town of Balat in Egypt* (Lund: Lund University, 2011), 57. In Dabaieh's ethnographic study of brick making, she documents that an average of 600 earthen bricks can be made in a seven-hour workday.
 - 13 Crum, *Coptic Dictionary*, 524a/b.
 - 14 Ibid., 431b.
 - 15 Jacques Dumont, along with others, make this important observation, as it impacts dramatically the methods and speed of construction, the life of the house for habitation, and the building's preservation in the archaeological record after abandonment. See Jacques Dumont, "Maison égyptienne et maison grecque," *Le Monde Copte* 20 (1992): 25–33.
 - 16 *PRoss. Georg.* V 50 (7th c.) describes the purchase of baked bricks from To Skelos.
 - 17 In 1895, architectural historian Somers Clarke decided he wanted to learn how mud bricks were made and then use them in the construction of his own home at al-Kab. His documentation of the process of brick making and construction convinced Clarke of the speed with which buildings could be completed. In one day alone, one man made more than 1,000 mud bricks with Nile mud. No scaffolding was required to build the walls for a 4 × 7 meter room. Clarke, *Christian Antiquities*, 24–30.
 - 18 Crum, *Coptic Dictionary*, 289a, 321b.
 - 19 Ibid., 431b.
 - 20 Ibid., 608b.
 - 21 Ibid., 595a.
 - 22 Ibid., 287a–288b. This Coptic word is often equated with the Greek *kellion* and thereby provides the notion of "cell." However, *kellion* is not a secret chamber. The Greek term for a secret or private room is *tameion*, but Coptic authors do not use this term to describe the room of the monk and instead use *ri* as the word for the monk's room or cell.
 - 23 Crum, *Coptic Dictionary*, 66a; Cerny, *Coptic Etymological Dictionary*, 411. Greek *oikos* appears in Greek papyri, but the word is not a common loan word in Coptic in matters relating to buildings and architecture. The title of *oikomenos* will, however, appear frequently in the discussion of management of *koinonia*.
 - 24 Crum, *Coptic Dictionary*, 546a.
 - 25 Ibid., 38b.
 - 26 Construction for a city began in the second century BCE and reached its peak in the second century CE. Many residents left Karanis in the following century, likely due to other factors affecting the Fayyum. Reclamation and rebuilding started in the fourth century, and the city was finally abandoned in the fifth century.
 - 27 A. E. R. Boak, ed., *Karanis: The Temples, Coin Hoards, Botanical and Zoological Reports: Seasons 1924–31* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1933); A. E. R. Boak and E. E. Peterson, *Karanis, Topographical and Architectural Report of the Excavations during the Seasons 1924–28* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, 1931); E. M. Husselman, *Karanis Excavations of the University of Michigan in Egypt 1928–1935: Topography and Architecture. A Summary of the Reports of the Director, Enoch E. Peterson* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1979).
 - 28 Roger S. Bagnall and Dominic W. Rathbone, *Egypt: From Alexander to the Early Christians: An Archaeological and Historical Guide* (Los Angeles: J. Paul Getty Museum, 2004), 131–134.
 - 29 N. Pollard, "The Chronology and Economic Condition of Late Roman Karanis: An Archaeological Reassessment," *JARCE* 35 (1998): 147–162; J. Rea, "P.Haum. III 58 Caranis in the Fifth Century," *ZPE* 99 (1993): 89–95.
 - 30 Roger Bagnall, "Village and City: Geographies of Power in Byzantine Egypt," in *Les Villages dans l'Empire byzantine, IVe–XVe siècle*, eds. Jacques Lefort, Cécile Morrison, and Jean-Pierre Sodini (Paris: Lethielleux, 2005), 553–565; Maria Nowicka, *La maison privée dans l'Égypte Ptolémaïque* (Warsaw: Ossolineum, 1969).

- 31 Peter van Minnen, "The Other Cities in Later Roman Egypt," in *Egypt in the Byzantine World*, 207–225.
- 32 Itzhak F. Fikhman, *Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft im spätantiken Ägypten: Kleine Schriften* (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 2006); Jean-Luc Fournet and Caroline Magdelaine, eds., *Les archives de Dioscore d'Aphrodité cent ans après leur découverte: Histoire et culture dans l'Égypte byzantine: Actes du Colloque de Strasbourg, 8–10 décembre 2005* (Paris: De Boccard, 2008); J. Gasou, *Fiscalité et société en Égypte byzantine* (Paris: Association des amis du Centre d'histoire et civilisation de Byzance, 2008); Julian Krüger, *Oxyrhynchos in der Kaiserzeit: Studien zur Topographie und Literaturrezeption* (Frankfurt: P. Lang, 1990); Todd M. Hickey, "An Inconvenient Truth? P.Oxy. 18.2196 verso, the Apion Estate, and fiscalité in the Late Antique Oxyrhynchite," *BASP* 45 (2008): 87–100; idem, *Wine, Wealth, and the State in Late Antique Egypt: The House of Apion at Oxyrhynchus* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2012); Jane Rowlandson, *Landowners and Tenants in Roman Egypt: The Social Relations of Agriculture in the Oxyrhynchite Nome* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996); Constantine Zukerman, *Du village à l'Empire: Autour du registre fiscal d'Aphrodité* (Paris: Association des amis du centre d'histoire et civilisation de Byzance, 2004).
- 33 Simon Ellis, "Late Antique Housing: An Overview," in *Housing in Late Antiquity: From Palaces to Shops*, eds. Luke Lavan, Lale Özgenel, and Alexander Sarantis (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 8; J.-P. Sodini, "Habitat de l'antiquité tardive," *Tôpoi* 7 (1997): 514–515.
- 34 Bagnall, *Egypt in Late Antiquity*, 81.
- 35 Keenan, "Byzantine Egyptian Villages," 226–243.
- 36 Bagnall in "Village and City" takes up Richard Alston's thesis that a decline in Nile Valley urban settings is due to shifting populations to the countryside with the particular movement of monks to the fringes. Bagnall does not find supportive evidence for this in the papyri for any particular period (563). See also J. Banaji, "Agrarian History and the Labour Organization of Byzantine Large Estates," in *Agriculture in Egypt: From Pharaonic to Modern Times*, eds. A. K. Bowman and E. Rogan (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 193–216; J. Gasou, "Les grands domaines, la cite et l'état en Égypte byzantine (Recherches d'histoire agraire, fiscale et administrative)," *Travaux et mémoires* 9 (1985): 1–90; Peter Sarris, "Continuity and Discontinuity in the Post-Roman Economy," *Journal of Agrarian Change* 6.3 (2006): 400–413.
- 37 *P.Mich.* VI 370. Rowlandson and Bagnall, *Women and Society in Greek and Roman Egypt*, 141–142.
- 38 *P.Flor.* 1.15; *P.Erl.* 73; *SB* 6. 9153, 9154, and 9462.
- 39 *SB* 9462. *P.Oxy.* XLVII 3355 (535) records parts of a part of house including a well, terraces, courtyard, and bread-coolers. Chris Wickham, *Framing the Early Middle Ages: Europe and the Mediterranean, 400–800* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 609.
- 40 Sauneron and Jacquet, eds., *Les ermitages chrétiens du désert d'Esna*, vol. I, 25.
- 41 From Philadelphia, *P.Cairo Zen* 4.5 9764; Hermopolite, *P.Ryl.* 2.233; *P.Lond.* 2.394.
- 42 *PSI* 6.669; *P.Bas* 19.
- 43 *PKRU* 35.22–38. MacCoull, *Coptic Legal Documents*, 65–68; Wilfong, *Women of Jeme*, 50–51.
- 44 Mieczysław Rodziewicz, "Le débat sur la topographie de la ville antique," *Alexandrie entre deux mondes, Revue des mondes musulmans et de la Méditerranée* 46 (1988): 38–48; idem, *Les habitations romaines tardives d'Alexandrie à lumière polonaises à Kom el-Dikka. Alexandrie III* (Warsaw: Éditions scientifiques de Pologne, 1984), 66–127; G. Majcherek, "Roman and Byzantine Houses from el-Dikka (Alexandria)," *Tôpoi* 5 (1995): 133–150; idem, "Un quartier d'habitation Gréco-Romain à Kôm el-Dikka," *Études et travaux* 9 (1976): 169–216.
- 45 Peter Grossmann, *Elephantine 2. Kirche und spätantike Hausanlagen im Chnumtempelhof, Beschreibung und typologische Untersuchung* (Mainz: Zabern, 1980), 29–34, 68–70.
- 46 Chritiane Ziegler, Jean-Pierre Adam, Guillemette Andreu, Catherine Bridonneau, Marc Étienne, Guy Lecuyot, and Marie-Françoise de Rozières, "Le mission archéologique du musée du Louvre à Saqqara: Résultats de quatre campagnes de fouilles de 1993 à 1996," *BIFAO* 97 (1997): 270–272 (hereafter Ziegler et al., "Saqqara"); Ziegler et al., "La mission archéologique," 270–272.
- 47 Arthur E. R. Boak, ed., *Soknopaiou Nesos; the University of Michigan excavations at Dimê in 1931–32* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan

- Press, 1935); Mario Capasso and Paola Davoli, eds., *Soknopaiou Nesos Project I, 2003–2009* (Pisa: F. Serra, 2012); Sandra Lippert and Maren Schentuleit, eds., *Tebtynis und Soknopaiou Nesos: Leben im römerzeitlichen Fajum: Akten des Internationalen Symposions vom 11. bis 13. Dezember 2003 in Sommerhausen bei Würzburg* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2005).
- 48 Christopher Haas, *Alexandria in Late Antiquity: Topography and Social Conflict* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997); Judith McKenzie, “Glimpsing Alexandria from Archaeological Evidence,” *Journal of Roman Archaeology* 16 (2003): 35–63.
- 49 Majcherek, “Kom el-Dikka: 2000/2001,” 43.
- 50 Grzegorz Majcherek, “Kom el-Dikka: Excavations 2000/2001,” *PAM* 13 (2001): 31–43.
- 51 Majcherek, “Kom el-Dikka: 2000/2001,” 39.
- 52 Ibid., 41–42.
- 53 For a discussion of the nondomestic architecture of Kom el-Dikka, see Judith McKenzie, *The Architecture of Alexandria and Egypt 300 BC–AD 700* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2007), 209–220.
- 54 McKenzie, *The Architecture of Alexandria and Egypt*, 210; Mieczyslaw Rodziewicz, “Remarks on the Domestic and Monastic Architecture in Alexandria and Surroundings,” in *The Archaeology of the Nile Delta, Egypt: Problems and Priorities*, ed. E. C. M. Van den Brick (Amsterdam: Netherlands Foundation for Archaeological Research in Egypt, 1988) 267–277.
- 55 G. Majcherek, “Notes on Alexandrian Habitat: Roman and Byzantine Houses from Kom el-Dikka,” *Topoi* 5 (1995): 133–150.
- 56 Haas, *Alexandria*, 196.
- 57 Ibid., 199.
- 58 In a note, Haas continues to explain the difficulties with estimating a number of inhabitants per room and dwelling. He writes: “[A]side from the question of house height, there is also the matter of determining density of occupation in such a house. Evidence from the Egyptian chora approximates an average of 11.27 occupants per house, strikingly similar to ratios from rural houses in modern Egypt showing 10.5 occupants per house. However, House D has an area of nearly 100 square meters, almost double the average area of house from Karanis – archaeologically, the best-known town in the chora. Moreover, one would expect domestic residency patterns to be markedly different in the teeming metropolis.” Haas, *Alexandria*, n. 38, 438.
- 59 Rodziewicz, *Habitations*, 70, 195–204.
- 60 Alston, *City in Roman and Byzantine Egypt*, 115.
- 61 Bagnall and Rathbone, *Egypt from Alexander to the Early Christians*, 169–172; Peter Grossmann, “Antinoopolis 2007. Vorläufiger Bericht über die Arbeiten im Herbst 2007,” *Aegyptus* 88 (2008): 207–226; idem, “Report on the Excavation of the Italian Mission at Antinoopolis in January/February 2010,” *BSAC* 49 (2010): 9–20; idem, “Zur Rekonstruktion der Südkirche von Antinoopolis,” *Vicino Oriente* 12 (2000): 269–281.
- 62 Five churches have been documented within the walls of the city of Antinoopolis. Grossmann, *Christliche Architektur in Ägypten*, 430–436.
- 63 Alison Gascoigne directed a survey project Ansina at 2005. See www.southampton.ac.uk/archaeology/research/projects/ansina_survey_project.page.
- 64 Peter Grossmann, “Die von Somers Clarke in Ober-Ansina entdeckten Kirchenbauten,” *MDAIK* 24 (1969): 144–168.
- 65 P.KRU 67. Leslie MacCoull trans., *Coptic Legal Documents: Law as Vernacular Text and Experience in Late Antique Egypt* (Tempe: Arizona State University Press, 2009), 120–126.
- 66 MacCoull, *Coptic Legal Documents*, 121, n. 9.
- 67 He identifies himself as priest of St. Colluthus’s in Psenantonius. MacCoull, *Coptic Legal Documents*, 126.
- 68 Goehring, “Monasticism in Byzantine Egypt,” 400.
- 69 Ibid.
- 70 An extensive bibliography exists for Roman and Byzantine housing. Alston, *The City in Roman and Byzantine Egypt*; I. M. Barton, *Roman Domestic Buildings* (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 1996); Kimberly D. Bowes, *Houses and Society in the Later Roman Empire* (London: Duckworth, 2010); K. R. Dark, *Secular Buildings and the Archaeology of Everyday Life in the Byzantine Empire* (Oxford: Oxbow, 2004); Simon P. Ellis, *Roman Housing* (London: Duckworth, 2000); Ray Laurence and Andrew Wallace-Hadrill, eds., *Domestic Space in the Roman World: Pompeii and Beyond* (Portsmouth, RI: JRA, 1997); Luke Lavan, Lale Özgenel, and Alexander Sarantis, *Housing in Late Antiquity: From Palaces to Shops* (Leiden: Brill, 2007); Alexander G. McKay, *Houses, Villas,*

- and *Palaces in the Roman World* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1975); Lisa C. Nevett, *Domestic Space in Classical Antiquity* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010); Wolf Schijns, *Vernacular Mud Brick Architecture in the Dakhleh Oasis: Egypt and the Design of the Dakhleh Oasis Training and Archaeological Conservation Centre* (Oxford: Oxbow, 2008); Yvon Thkbert, "Private Life and Domestic Architecture in Roman Africa," in *A History of Private Life. I. From Pagan Rome to Byzantium*, ed. Paul Veyne (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1987), 313–410.
- 71 Claudio Gallazzi and Gisèle Hadji-Minaglou, eds., *Tebtynis*, FIFAO 42 (Cairo: IFAO, 2000); Sandra Lippert and Maren Schentuleit, ed., *Tebtynis und Soknopaiu Nesos: Leben im römischen Fajum* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2005).
 - 72 The collection is housed at the University of California and is core for the *Center for the Tebtunis Papyri* (<http://tebtunis.berkeley.edu>), directed by Todd Hickey. See Arthur E. R. Boak, ed., *Papyri from Tebtunis* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1933–1944); B. P. Grenfell, A. S. Hunt, and E. J. Goodspeed, eds., *Tebtunis Papyri*, 4 vols. (London: British Academy by Egypt Exploration Society, 1902); B. A. van Groningen, ed., *A Family-Archive from Tebtunis* (Lugdunum Batavorum: Brill, 1950).
 - 73 C. C. Walters begins his article by letting readers know that "no detailed record appears to have been kept" for the one week of work spent on the clearing of the church and the associated buildings. C. C. Walters, "Christian Paintings from Tebtunis," *JEA* 75 (1989): 191–208.
 - 74 Ian Begg, "Excavating the Churches of Tebtunis," *JCSCS* 1 (2010): 69–73; Marie-Odile Rousset, Sylvie Marchand, and Danièle Foy, "Secteur nord de Tebtynis (Fayyoun). Mission de 2000," *AI* 35 (2001): 409–489; Marie-Odile Rousset and Sylvie Marchand, "Secteur nord de Tebtynis (Fayyoun) Mission de 1999," *AI* 34.2 (2000): 387–436; Marie-Odile Rousset, Sylvie Marchand, Damien Laisney, and Sandrine Robert, "Tebtynis 1998. Travaux dans le secteur nord," *AI* 33 (1999): 185–262.
 - 75 el-Hawary, Hassan Mohamed, "Une maison de l'époque toulounide," *Bulletin de l'institut d'Égypte* 15 (1932–1933): 79–87.
 - 76 In order to be consistent throughout the discussion of all the various sites, I have elected to convert all Roman numeral building designations.
 - 77 Rousset and Marchand, "Tebtynis, 2000," 420–421.
 - 78 Ceramic assemblages from the rooms date between the mid-seventh to eighth century. Rousset and Marchand, "Tebtynis, 2000," 421.
 - 79 Rousset and Marchand, "Tebtynis, 2000," 421.
 - 80 Ibid., 422, fig. 12.
 - 81 Rousset and Marchand, "Tebtynis, 2000," 462.
 - 82 Ibid., 461 and fig. 44.
 - 83 Courtyards and walls within courtyards were immoveable property that could be sold, divided, and leased. *PKRU* 9 (713 or 730) and *PKRU* 51 (724).
 - 84 Danièle Foy, "Secteur nord de Tebtynis (Fayyoun) le verre byzantine et islamique," in Rousset and Marchand, "Tebtynis, 2000," 465–489.
 - 85 In New Kingdom Egypt, cylindrical ovens were built into homes at Deir el-Medina and at the Workmen's Village at Amarna. However, the presence of the ovens diminishes with the Hellenistic period. Delwen Samuel, "Brewing and Baking," in *Ancient Egyptian Materials and Technology*, eds. Paul T. Nicholson and Ian Shaw (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 557–569.
 - 86 *BGU* 4.1067 and *P.Bacch.* 13. Elinor M. Husselman, "The Granaries of Karanis," *APA* 83 (1952): 56–73; L. A. Mortiz, *Grain Mills and Flour in Classical Antiquity* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1958).
 - 87 In D. Depraetere's examination of more than ninety bread ovens, he has identified four major types of ovens spread throughout Egypt at nineteen sites from the classical and post-Classical periods. While ovens in the later periods of his study are mostly type III and IV in form, the oven at Tebtunis is closer to earlier type I and II. See David D. E. Depraetere, "A Comparative Study on the Construction and the Use of the Domestic Bread Oven in Egypt during the Graeco-Roman and Late Antique/Early Byzantine Period," *MDAIK* 58 (2002): 119–156; S. Yeivin, "Miscellanea archaeological: I. Ovens and Baking in Roman Egypt," *ASAE* 34 (1934): 114–121.
 - 88 Freek Baadbaart, Imogen Poole, Hans D. J. Huisman, and Bertil van Os, "Fuel, Fire and Heat: An Experimental Approach to Highlight the Potential of Studying Ash and Char Remains from Archaeological

- Contexts,” *JAS* 39.4 (2012): 836–847; Kathleen Deckers, “The ‘Dung-as-fuel’ Model Tested at Two Syrian Jezirah Sites,” in *Holocene Landscapes through Time in the Fertile Crescent*, ed. Kathleen Deckers (Turnhout: Brepols, 2011), 143–155; Naomi F. Miller, “The Interpretation of Some Carbonized Cereal Remains as Remnants of Dung Cake Fuel,” *Bulletin on Sumerian Agriculture* 1 (1984): 45–47; idem, “The Use of Dung as Fuel: An Ethnographic Example and an Archaeological Application,” *Paléorient* 10.2 (1984): 71–79; Naomi F. Miller and J. M. Marston, “Archaeological Fuel Remains as Indicators of Ancient West Asian Agropastoral and Land-Use Systems,” *JAE* 86 (2012): 97–103; Wendy Smith, “Fuel for Thought: Archaeobotanical Evidence for the Use of Alternatives to Wood Fuel in Late Antique North Africa,” *JMA* 11.2 (1998): 191–205.
- 89 Christiane Ziegler, Jean-Pierre Adam, Guillemette Andreu, Catherine Bridonneau, Marc Étienne, Guy Lecuyot, and Marie-Françoise de Rozières, “Le mission archéologique du musée du Louvre à Saqqara: Résultats de quatre campagnes de fouilles de 1993 à 1996,” *BIFAO* 97 (1997): 269–292.
- 90 Ziegler, “Saqqara, 1993–1996,” fig. 3.
- 91 Ibid., 271.
- 92 Roland-Pierre Gayraud et al., “Iṣṭabl ‘Antar (Fostat) 1994: Rapport de fouilles,” *AI* 25 (1991): 57–87.
- 93 Gayraud, “Iṣṭabl ‘Antar (Fostat) 1994,” 66–67.
- 94 Ibid., 67.
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- 96 Ziegler, “Saqqara, 1993–1996,” 271.
- 97 A. A. Ostrasz, “The Archaeological Material for the Study of the Domestic Architecture at Fustat,” *AB* 26 (1977): 57–86.
- 98 Dominique Bénazeth, *Catalogue général du Musée copte du Caire* (Cairo: IFAO, 2001).
- 99 Owners asked to supply their own door *P.Ryl.* 2.249 (118); doors being stolen from a residence by robbers *P.Tebt.* 1.45, 47 (113); and doors made from mats *P.Oxy* 1.148 (556).
- 100 Husselman, *Karanis*, 44–46.
- 101 *P.Oxy.* 1.69 (190); *P.Oslo* III (235); *P.Oxy.* 44.3195 (331).
- 102 The debate and discussion about the nature of Egypt’s economic and demographic health is the subject of several studies that can be explored in the following works.
- Keenan, “Deserted Villages,” 119–139; idem, “Landscape and Memory: al-Nabulsi’s Ta’rikh al-Fayyum,” *BASP* 42 (2005): 203–212; P. van Minnen, “Deserted Villages: Two Late Antique Town Sites in Egypt,” *BASP* 32 (1995): 41–56.
- 103 Brooks Hedstrom, “The Geography of the Monastic Cell,” 756–791.
- 104 Kim Knott, “Spatial Theory and the Study of Religion,” *Religion Compass* 2/6 (2008): 1102–1116; Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith (Oxford: Blackwell, 1974).
- 105 Knott, “Spatial Theory,” 1110–1111.
- 106 *History of the Monks of Egypt*, Prologue 10; Ward, *Lives of the Desert Fathers*, 50.
- 107 *History of the Monks of Egypt*, Prologue 5, 7; Ward, *Lives of the Desert Fathers*, 50.
- 108 CE 362b–372b; Wipszycska, *Moines et Communautés monastiques en Égypte*, 143–160; Jean Clédât, “Baouit,” in *Dictionnaire d’Archéologie Chrétienne et de Liturgie*, 2/1, ed. by Fernand Cabrol and Henri Leclercq (Paris: Letouzey et Ané, 1925), cols. 203–251; idem and K. Wessel, “Bawit,” in *Reallexikon zur byzantinischen Kunst*, vol. 1 (Stuttgart: A. Hiersemann, 1966), cols. 568–583.
- 109 The difficult work of rebuilding the archive is due to painstaking work of Alain Delattre and Sarah J. Clackson, *Papyrus grecs et coptes de Baouît conservés au musée du Louvre P. Louvre Bawit 1–83* (Cairo: IFAO, 2014).
- 110 H. Buschhausen, W. Pahl, and T. Pertlwieser, “Die Identifizierung des ältesten authentischen Heiligen Ägyptens,” in *Fifth International Congress of Coptic Studies*, vol. 1., ed. T. Orlandi (Rome: Centro Italiano Microfiches, 1993), 91–103; Gawdat Gabra, “Zur Vita des Bane (Abu Fana) eines Heiligen des 4./5. Jahrhunderts,” *BSAC* 29 (1990): 26–42.
- 111 M. Martin, *La laure de Dêr al Dîk à Antinoé* (Cairo: IFAO, 1971). This volume is not an excavation monograph, but nevertheless is a thorough report of the remains at Dayr al-Dîk based on Martin’s observations at the settlement in an effort to document the Coptic remains.
- 112 Harald Baulig, “Das frühe Christentum in Hermopolis Magna: Beiträge zur Geschichte des christlichen Ägypten” (PhD diss., Universität Trier, 1984); Peter Grossmann, “Ruinen des Kloster Dair al-Balaiza in Oberägypten,” *Jahrbuch für Antike und*

- Christentum* 36 (1993): 171–203 and Tafelen 12–16; idem, “Die unterkunftsbauten des Koinobitenklosters ‘Dair al-Balayza’ im Vergleich mit den Eremitagen der Mönche von Kellia,” in *Le site monastique copte des Kellia*, ed. Philippe Bridel (Genève: Mission suisse d’archéologie copte de l’université de Genève, 1986), 33–39.
- 113 Jean Gascou, “Documents grec relatifs au monastère d’abba Apollon de Titkois,” *Anagennēsis* 1 (1981): 219–230.
- 114 Clackson, *Coptic and Greek Texts*, 4.
- 115 Clackson, *Coptic and Greek Texts*, 3. Bawit derives from the Coptic *pauyt*, which is another term for monastery, and was later adopted as the site name in Arabic.
- 116 CE, 362 b; Clackson, *Coptic and Greek Texts*, 3; R.-G. Coquin, “Apollon de Titkooh ou Apollon de Bawit?” *Orientalia* 46 (1977): 436–466.
- 117 See Chapter 1 for the history of the excavation at Bawit.
- 118 Gordana Babić, *Les Chapelles annexes des églises Byzantines: Fonction liturgique et programmes iconographiques* (Paris: Éditions Klincksieck, 1969), 28–31.
- 119 Clédat, “Recherches sur le kôm de Baouît,” 526.
- 120 Ibid., 528. A similar suggestion was made the following year by Crum, who drew on the documentary and epigraphic sources. Walter E. Crum, “Der hl. Apollo und das Kloster von Bawit,” *Zeitschrift für Ägyptische Sprache und Altertumskunde* 40 (1902): 60–62.
- 121 Ibid., 531.
- 122 MIFAO XII.1, v–vi.
- 123 H.-G. Severin, “Bawit,” in CE, 364.
- 124 Bénazeth, “Histoire des fouilles,” 60. No reports were produced outside of internal reporting for the Egyptian Antiquities Service, although the geophysical surveys conducted between 2002 and 2007 was able to identify and map the buildings excavated in the 1980s.
- 125 Dominique Bénazeth, “Histoire des fouilles de Baouit,” in *Études Coptes IV* (Louvain: Peeters, 1995), 53–62; idem, “Recherches archéologiques à Baouit. Un nouveau départ,” *BSAC* 43 (2004): 9–26; idem, “Nouvelle campagne de fouilles à Baouit (2004),” in *Études Coptes X, Douzième journée d’études*, ed. by A. Boud’hors and C. Louis (Paris: De Boccard, 2008), 11–22.
- 126 Marie-Hélène Rutschowskaya, “Reprise des fouilles françaises à Baouit: Louvre/Ifao 2002–2003,” in *Acts du huitième congrès international l’études coptes*, Paris, 28 juin – 3 juillet 2004, eds. N. Bosson and Anne Boud’hors (Louvain: Peeters, 2007), 311–322.
- 127 Ramez Boutros and Marie-Hélène Rutschowskaya, “Baouit. Mission musée du Louvre/Ifao. Sondages dans le monastère de Baouit – 2003,” *BIFAO* 105 (2005): 13–34.
- 128 G. Hadji-Minagou, “Baouit,” in “Travaux de l’Institut français d’archéologie orientale,” L. Pantalacci and S. Denoix, *BIFAO* 108 (2008): 407–411; idem, “Baouit,” *BIFAO* 109 (2009): 560–564; idem, “Baouit,” *BIFAO* 110 (2010): 370–373; Anna Poludnikiewicz and Alexandra Konstantinidou, “Bawit – Church ‘D,’” *BCE* 23 (2012): 91–99.
- 129 Dominique Bénazeth, “Les sculptures de Baouit réemployées au XIXe siècle,” *Études Coptes* 7 (2000): 50–67; idem, “Un monastère dispersé. Les antiquités de Baouit conservées dans les musées d’Égypte,” *BIFAO* 97 (1997): 43–66; J. des Graviers, “Inventaire des objets coptes de la salle de Baouit au Louvre,” *Rivista di Archeologia Cristiana* 9 (1932): 51–102; Marie-Hélène Rutschowskaya, *Catalogue des bois de l’Égypte copte* (Paris: RMN, 1986); idem, “Le monastère de Baouit au musée du Louvre,” *L’archéologue* 43 (1999): 39–41.
- 130 Clackson, *Coptic and Greek Texts Relating to the Hermopolite Monastery of Apa Apollo* (2000) and *It Is Our Father Who Writes: Orders from the Monastery of Apollo at Bawit* (2008); Anne Boud’hors, *Ostraca grecs et coptes: Des fouilles de Jean Maspero à Baouit: O.Bawit IFAO 1–67 et O. Nancy* (Cairo: IFAO, 2004); Alain Delattre, *Papyrus coptes et grecs du monastère d’apa Apollô de Baouit conservés aux Musées Royaux d’Art et d’Histoire de Bruxelles* (Bruxelles: Académie royale de Belgique, 2004). Additional publications on the inscriptions, which were published extensively in the IFAO volumes, include Martin Krause, “Die Inschriften auf den Türsturzbalken des Apa-Apollon-Klosters von Bawit,” *Cahiers d’orientalisme* 20 (1988): 111–120; Sarah Clackson, “Reconstructing the Archives of the Monastery of Apollo at Bawit,” in *Atti del XXII Congresso Internazionale di Papirologia, Firenze, 23–29 agosto 1998*, eds. I. Andorlini et al. (Florence: Istituto papirologico G. Vitelli, 2001), 219–236.
- 131 An example is Alain Delattre, “Remarques sur quelques inscriptions du monastère de Baouit,” *BIFAO* 108 (2008): 69–81.

- 132 Torp, “La date de la fondation du monastère d’Apa Apollô,” 153–177; Torp, “Some Aspects of Early Coptic Monastic Architecture,” 513–538.
- 133 Clédât, *MIFAO* 39, 185.
- 134 Hans-Georg Severin reexamined the famous South Church uncovered at Bawit in “Zur Süd-Kirche von Bawit,” *MDAIK* 33 (1977): 113–124; Rutschowskaya, *Catalogue des bois de l’Égypte copte*, 102–158.
- 135 Severin, “Bawit,” *CE*, 364.
- 136 Grossmann, *Christliche Architektur in Ägypten*, 71–76; Severin, “Bawit,” *CE* 365. Both churches employed spolia from area buildings.
- 137 Poludnikiewicz and Konstantinidou, “Bawit – Church ‘D,’” 91–99.
- 138 Eighth-century examples are found in Chapel 7. *MIFAO* 12. no. 11. Chapel 17 contains three funerary inscriptions for the eighth century: *MIFAO* 12.2, no. 5, 84; no. 9, 84; no. 10, 85.
- 139 “Bawit,” *CE*, 363.
- 140 Krause and Wessel, “Bawit,” 568–583. Krause makes the point that many of the proposed dates are subjective and based on comparative material with other Byzantine material.
- 141 For example, the first major excavation of a pharaonic domestic settlement was Petrie’s work at al-Lahun (Kahun) from 1880–1890. W. M. Flinders Petrie et al., *Illahun, Kahun, and Gurob* (London: David Nutt, 1891); idem, *Kahun, Gurob, and Hawara* (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner, and Co., 1890). The next two most significant sites with a residential component were the beginning of long-standing projects at Dayr al-Madinah in Thebes, by Ernesto Schiaparelli from 1905–1909 and then Bernard Bruyère and at Amarna with Ludwig Borchardt’s work on the residences from 1911 to 1914. Ernesto Schiaparelli, *Relazione sui lavori della missione archeologica italiana in Egitto*, vol. 1 (Torino: R. Museo di Antichità, 1927); Bernard Bruyère, *Rapport sur les fouilles de Deir el Médineh (Années 1945–1946 et 1946–1947): Constructions et trouvailles* (Cairo: IFAO, 1952); Albrecht Endruweit, *Städtischer Wohnbau in Ägypten: Klimagerechte Lehmarchitektur in Amarna* (Berlin: Gebr. Mann, 1994). Ongoing work at Dayr al-Medina and Amarna illustrate the deep interest in domestic archaeology. Anna Stevens, *Akhenaten’s Workers: The Amarna Stone Village Survey, 2005–2009* (London: Egypt Exploration Society, 2012); Barry J. Kemp and Anna Stevens, *Busy Lives at Amarna: Excavations in the Main City* (London: Egypt Exploration Society, 2010); Nira Kleinke, *Female Spaces: Untersuchungen zu Gender und Archäologie im pharaonischen Ägypten* (Göttingen: Seminar für Ägyptologie und Koptologie der Universität Göttingen, 2007); Lynn Meskell, “An Archaeology of Social Relations in an Egyptian Village,” *JAMT* 5/3 (1998): 209–243.
- 142 O’Connell, “The Discovery of Christian Egypt,” 163–176.
- 143 Krause, “Bawit,” 573.
- 144 Clédât posited that the monastic settlement was built atop a necropolis, but Maspero later disputed this claim. The monastic community did bury its dead either in tombs made from the naturally forming caves or in simple mud brick enclosures.
- 145 The Monastery of Apa Jeremias has, for example, several more funerary stelae used in different phases of construction and rebuilding.
- 146 Bagnall and Rathbone, *Egypt from Alexander to the Early Christians*, 127.
- 147 Krause, *Bawit*, 570–571.
- 148 The major sculpture pieces and wall paintings were divided between the Coptic Museum in Cairo and the Louvre in Paris. See de Gravières, “Inventaire des objectés coptes de la Salle de Baouit au Louvre,” 50–102; Bénazeth, “Un monastère dispersé,” 43–66.
- 149 *MIFAO* 12.1, viii.
- 150 Herbich and Bénazeth, “The kôm at Baouît,” 183–187.
- 151 André Grabar, *Martyrium: Recherches sur le culte des reliques et l’art chrétien antique* (London: Variorum Reprints, 1972), 207–234, 280–283, and 296–310.
- 152 Torp, “Some Aspects of Early Coptic Monastic Architecture,” 25–27.
- 153 Torp, “Le monastère copte,” 6.
- 154 Ibid. 7–8.
- 155 Ibid. 8.
- 156 Torp, “Some Aspects of Early Coptic Monastic Architecture,” 513.
- 157 Tomasz Herbich and Dominique Bénazeth, “Le kôm de Baouît. Étapes d’une cartographie,” *BIFAO* 108 (2008): 165–204.
- 158 M.-H. Rutschowskaya and D. Bénazeth, “Neue Grabungen im Kloster von Bawit (2003–2004),” *Kemet* 14.1 (2005): 56–59; M.-H. Rutschowskaya, “Reprise des fouilles françaises à Baouît: Louvre/Ifao 2002–2003,” in

- Acts du huitième congrès international d'études coptes* (Paris, 28 juin–3 juillet 2004), eds. N. Bosson and A. Boud'hors (Louvain: Peeters, 2007), 311–322; Ramez Boutros et al., “Sondages dans le monastère de Baouit. — 2003,” *BIFAO* 105 (2005): 13–34.
- 159 Gregory Marouard, “Les ermitages de Baouit. Résultats d'un Survey: topographie du secteur,” public presentation at *Ermitages d'Égypte au premier millénaire*, at IFAO in Cairo, January 2009; Sylvie Marchand, “Les ermitages de Baouit. Résultats d'un Survey: Le mobilier archéologique,” public presentation at *Ermitages d'Égypte au premier millénaire*, at IFAO in Cairo, January 2009. Wipszycka, *Moines et communautés monastiques en Égypte*, 148.
- 160 The first six rooms of this complex are referred to by Maspero as Site B (*MIFAO* 59, 1–23).
- 161 Measures 2.65 × 5.75 and matches other small rooms identified by Clédât. *MIFAO* 59, 13.
- 162 *MIFAO* 59, 18.
- 163 Torp used these rooms as a sample for further investigation into what could be understood about the architectural inspiration for the barrel-vaulted spaces. Torp, “Le monastère copte,” 8.
- 164 Samples of the panels are on display at the Coptic Museum (Inv. Nos. 8437, 8438, 8439). *MIFAO* 59, plates XV–XXIV.
- 165 Christ in Majesty appears in other chapels at Bawit (Chapel 17. *MIFAO* 12.2, plate XLII) and Saqqara. Elizabeth S. Bolman, “Depicting the Kingdom of Heaven: Paintings and Monastic Practice in Early Byzantine Egypt,” in *Egypt in the Byzantine World 300–700*, ed. by Roger S. Bagnall (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 423–424.
- 166 *MIFAO* 59, plates XXI–XXIV.
- 167 *MIFAO* 59, 22.
- 168 Other examples of painters signing the walls appear at Bawit such as Jacob and George, the painters, as found on the north wall of Chapel 3 (*MIFAO* 12.1, 15).
- 169 *MIFAO* 59, nos. 58 and 60, 63 and 64.
- 170 *MIFAO* 59, vi–vii. Torp refers to this invocation by stating inscriptions frequently include this phrase, but it has been found only in Hall 6, although it was used seven times. Torp, “Le monastère copte,” 5.
- 171 *MIFAO* 59, nos. 59, 145, 203, 244, 296.
- 172 *Ibid.*, nos. 59, 63.
- 173 East Wall Chapel 30 no. 1 (*MIFAO* 39, 9); Hall 6 nos. 59, 60, 80, 94 (*MIFAO* 59, 63, 64, 67, 68). For a discussion of *pa tri*, see Delattre, “Remarques sur quelques inscriptions du monastère de Baouit,” 77.
- 174 Clédât discusses the inscription on the center of the west wall, to the right of two peacocks who flank a bejeweled cross. In the discussion of the text, Clédât suggests that *TRI* is a place and does not consider that it may mean the physical space of the cell or room in which he works. West Wall Chapel 19 (*MIFAO* 12.2, 103 and plate LXXIX); East Wall Chapel 19 nos. 5, 6, and possibly no. 7 (107, 108, 110).
- 175 East Wall Chapel 18 no. 11 in red (*MIFAO* 12.2, 96); West Wall by a painting of a ship Chapel 39 Apa Kuriakos no. 10 (*MIFAO* 39, 45).
- 176 *MIFAO* 59, no. 203, 87, and plate XIXB. It is not possible to see the dipinto in the image.
- 177 East Wall Chapel 26 no. 2 and West Wall Chapel 26 no. 13 (*MIFAO* 12.2, 138, 140); Chapel 29 no. 1 (*MIFAO* 12.2); Hall 6 nos. 73 (east wall), 195, 345 (west wall) (*MIFAO* 59, 66, 85, 111).
- 178 East wall of Chapel 12 (*MIFAO* 12.1, 64).
- 179 Dipinti with references to *manshōpe* include Chapel 1 no. 17 (*MIFAO* 12.1, 7); Chapel 3 no. 14 (*MIFAO* 12.1, 27); Chapel 7 nos. 6, 27 (*MIFAO* 12.1, 42, 46); Inscription under image of Zephaniah and another inscription on the east wall of Chapel 12 (*MIFAO* 12.1, 62, 64); Chapel 17 (*MIFAO* 12.2, 82); Chapel 18 nos. 8, 16 (*MIFAO* 12.2, 96, 97); Chapel 20 (*MIFAO* 12.2, 119–120); North Wall Hall 21 nos. 446, 454 (*MIFAO* 59, 129, 133).
- 180 Chapel 3 no. 14 (*MIFAO* 12.1, 27); Krause, “Die Inschriften auf den Türstürzbalken des Apa-Apollon-Klosters von Bawit,” 111–120.
- 181 Chapel 12 (*MIFAO* 12.1, 62); West wall Chapel 18 no. 8 Apa Daniel, no. 16 Brother Joseph (*MIFAO* 12.2, 96, 97).
- 182 The convention is used six times in the dipinti and found in four different buildings.
- 183 Palanque found buildings with similar iconography in the south end of the mound. “Rapport 1903,” Plate XII–XIII.
- 184 Chapel 17 North Wall (*MIFAO* 12.2, 82 and plate LVI).
- 185 North Wall Hall 21 no. 446 (*MIFAO* 59, 129).
- 186 East Wall Hall 21 no. 454 (*MIFAO* 59, 133).
- 187 South Wall Chapel 23 (*MIFAO* 12.2, 131); Chapel 26 nos. 2, 13 (*MIFAO* 12.2, 138, 140); Chapel 29 no. 1 (*MIFAO* 12.1, 51); Chapel 39 nos. 10, 15 (*MIFAO* 39, 45–46); Hall 6 nos. 73,

- 195, 345 (*MIFAO* 59, 66, 85, 111); West Wall Hall 10 no. 39 and East Wall no. 454 (*MIFAO* 59, 121, 133).
- 188 Chapel 19 inscription in discussion and nos. 5, 7 (*MIFAO* 12.2, 105, 107–108); Chapel 30 no. 1 (*MIFAO* 39, 9); Hall 6 nos. 59, 60, 80, 94, 388, 389 (*MIFAO* 39, 63–64, 67–68, 117–118); Hall 28 no. 477 (*MIFAO* 59, 137–138).
- 189 Hall 6 nos. 265, 288, 345 (*MIFAO* 59, 98, 102, 111).
- 190 South Wall Chapel 3 by the door (*MIFAO* 12.1, 22); West wall Chapel 7 no. 15 (*MIFAO* 12.1, 44).
- 191 North Wall Hall 21. Below a Coptic list of saints and petitions is a Greek petition with the petition's name ε τουτου μονστηρου αβα απολλω (*MIFAO* 59, 129–130).
- 192 Examples include: Chapels 2 and 3 measure 5×2.3 – 3.6 m (*MIFAO* 12.1); Chapel 18 measures 12×4.65 m (*MIFAO* 12.2); Chapel 27 measures 7.6×4.5 m (*MIFAO* 12.2); Chapels 34 and 35 measure 6.3 – 6.4×3.25 – 5 m (*MIFAO* 39). The measurements of halls excavated by Maspero were only recorded on his schematic plan and not provided in the narrative description of the spaces.
- 193 The later excavations at Karanis (1924–1928) and at Medinet Habu (1920s–1930s) provided new evidence for mud brick domestic architecture that was not known when Clédât and Maspero worked at Bawit. For domestic use of brick barrel vaulting, see Hölscher, *The Excavations of Medinet Habu, V*, House 32, plate 29; Boak and Peterson, *Karanis*, plate XVIII, fig. 35.
- 194 Examples include the domes over square rooms Chapel 12 (*MIFAO* 12.1), 17, 21, 22, 26 (all *MIFAO* 12.2). The excavation descriptions of rooms was not always consistent, and, therefore, if not mentioned in the text or photographed, we cannot know the roofing for many of the spaces.
- 195 Torp described the interior vaulting as an “independent baldachin” and the interpretation reinforced his view that the rooms were mortuary spaces. Torp, “Some Aspects of Early Coptic Monastic Architecture,” 516–518.
- 196 Chapel no. 1, 1903, Palanque, “Rapport 1903,” plate VIII.
- 197 Examinations of the visual programs at The Monastery of Apa Apollo appear in a variety of publications. For an introduction to the studies, see M.-H. Rassart-Debergh, “Notes sur les églises de Baouît. Une relecture du dossier de Clédât,” in *Études coptes VI, Huitième journée d'études* (Louvain: Peeters, 2000), 84–89, 94.
- 198 *MIFAO* 12.2, 74.
- 199 Herbich and Bénazeth, “Le kôm de Baouît,” No. 20.
- 200 For discussion of Chapel 28 see *MIFAO* 12.2, 153–164. The plan in the 1916 publication for the discussion of Chapel 39 shows the physical relationship to Chapel 28 (*MIFAO* 13, fig. 27, p. 43). The alignment of the rooms is also visible on the magnetic map produced in Herbich and Bénazeth, “Le kôm de Baouît,” figs. 16 and 21.
- 201 The standard square room at Bawit is roughly 5×5 meters. *MIFAO* 12.2, 155.
- 202 *MIFAO* 12.2, 162–164. These forms were only recorded but not analyzed in any formal manner. A few line drawings of the amphorae are included in the reports, but the reports lack any discussion of the ceramic corpus from the site.
- 203 For a discussion of this particular niche of the enthroned Mother of God, see Kakovkine, “La scène unique de la peinture mural dans une chapelle a Baouit,” 27–36.
- 204 Many bronze censers still exist from the medieval period: Hishmat Misihah, “A Bronze Censor [sic] in the Coptic Museum, no. 5144,” *ASAE* 56 (1959): 31–33.
- 205 *MIFAO* 12.2, plates XCVIII. Christa Belting-Ihm, *Die Programme der christlichen Apsismalerei vom vierten Jahrhundert bis zur Mitte des achten Jahrhunderts* (Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1960). Clédât suggests that a third niche on the north wall was likely to hold a portrait of Ananias, the third man in the story (*MIFAO* 12.2, 158). See also Jacob Muyser, “Le Culte des Trois Saints Jeunes Gens chez les Coptes,” *Chiers Coptes* 6 (1954): 1–15; M. Rassart-Debergh, “Les trios Hébreux dans la fournaise en Égypte et en Nubie chrétiennes,” *Rivista degli studi orientali* 58 (1987): 141–151. The three saints are also mentioned in Chapel 42. The three Hebrews are represented with only Ananias's name preserved, *MIFAO* 59, plate XLV, 59.1; *MIFAO* 111, 46. For a discussion of the iconography of the three Hebrews in a Coptic context, see Gertrud J. M. Loon, *The Gate of Heaven: Wall Paintings with Old Testament Scenes in the Altar Room and the Hurus of Coptic Churches* (Istanbul: Nederlands Historisch-Archaeologisch Instituut te Istanbul, 1999), 167–176.
- 206 Clédât suggested two niches may have existed on the north wall to create a sense of

- symmetry between those found on the southern wall (*MIFAO* 12.2, 160–161).
- 207 Lists of famous monastic fathers are common at Saqqara, Kellia, and Esna as part of the representation found near the central eastern niche.
- 208 *MIFAO* 12.2, 154–155.
- 209 Their monastic dress and liturgical equipment mirror the two angels in the east niche who carry censers. But the saints hold boxes that would hold the liturgical items.
- 210 *MIFAO* 12.2, 159.
- 211 *apa kuriakos piōtenptopos* Chapel 39 no. 10 *MIFAO* 13, 45.
- 212 Clédât asserted his interpretation on the basis of the spatial configuration of the building. Specifically, he understood the presence of a large, central niche in the middle of the west wall and the presence of three windows on the north wall to be indicators funerary architecture. *MIFAO* 12.2, 104.
- 213 *MIFAO* 12.2, 118.
- 214 The city of Tri appears elsewhere at Bawit and at other Middle Egyptian sites. Clédât suggests that the place is located in the village of Assiut (*MIFAO* 12.2, 105, n.1).
- 215 *MIFAO* 12.2, 111–116.
- 216 Antonio Iacobini, *Visioni dipinte: Immagini della contemplazione negli affreschi di Bawit* (Rome: Viella, 2000).
- 217 See *MIFAO* 59, Plate XI, c.
- 218 *MIFAO* 59, Plate XXVII B.
- 219 Maspero's notes did not include measurements for this room. *MIFAO* 59, 7, 28.
- 220 *MIFAO* 59, 43.
- 221 Nos. 498–501; 504–509 *MIFAO* LIX, 142–144.
- 222 *Ama theut[ot]e tmaau nthe[neete]*. Restoration by Droiton. *MIFAO* 59, 144.
- 223 A recent analysis of salted fish and related material from Bawit is providing valuable evidence for writing an archaeology of food consumption at the community. See Wim Van Neer, Wim Wouters, Marie-Hélène Rutschowskaya, et al., “Salted Fish Products from the Coptic Monastery at Bawit, Egypt: Evidence from the Bones and Texts,” in *The Role of Fish in Ancient Time*, ed. Heidemarie Hüster Plogmann (Rahden: Verlag Marie Leidorf, 2007), 147–159.
- 224 *MIFAO* 59, 44.
- 225 *MIFAO* 59, plate LI, A and B.
- 226 Uriel is flanked on the left by five male monks and on the right by three male monks and one female monk. *MIFAO* 59, Plate XLVII b; Plate XLIX and L. For his inclusion in Coptic spells, see Meyer, *Ancient Christian Magic*, Spell 57, 66, 71, 92, 125, 129, 131, 133.
- 7 LOOKING AT EGYPT'S MONASTIC BUILT ENVIRONMENTS
- 1 Hassan Fathy, *Architecture for the Poor: An Experiment in Rural Egypt* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1973).
- 2 *P.Bal.* 51. Trans. Kahle, 471–473, no. 51. Kahle translates Coptic *manshōpe* as “cell.”
- 3 J. M. Vansleb, *Nouvelle Relation en forme de journal d'un voyage fait en Égypte en 1672 et 1673* (Paris: E. Michallet, 1677), 277.
- 4 Swenson, 240.
- 5 See Chapter 1 for history of the archaeological work at Saqqara.
- 6 Peter Grossmann, “Reinigungsarbeiten im Jeremiaskloster von Saqqara. Vorläufiger Bericht,” *MDAIK* 27 (1971): 173–180; idem, “Reinigungsarbeiten im Jeremiaskloster von Saqqara: Zweiter vorläufiger Bericht,” 28 (1972): 145–152; idem, “Reinigungsarbeiten im Jeremiaskloster von Saqqara. III,” 36 (1980): 193–202; idem and H.-G. Severin, “Reinigungsarbeiten im Jeremiaskloster von Saqqara. IV,” *MDAIK* 38 (1982): 155–193. A later examination of the inscriptions from Saqqara is Cäcilia Wietheger, *Das Jeremias-Kloster zu Saqqara unter besonderer Berücksichtigung der Inschriften* (Altenberge: Oros, 1992).
- 7 H.-G. Severin, “Zur spätantiken Bauskulptur im Jeremiaskloster,” *MDAIK* 38 (1982): 170–193.
- 8 “Dayr Apa Jeremiah (Saqqara),” CE 3: 773.
- 9 Ibid.
- 10 Wipszycka, *Moines et communautés*, 127.
- 11 Quibell admits that at times the plan was finished before clearing was complete in a room. For example, in Room 705 he elected to not include two features that were “very late” and recognized features after the fact but did not correct the plan (*Excavations at Saqqara*, 3: 10, 12).
- 12 *Excavations at Saqqara*, 2: 64–67.
- 13 M.-H. Rassart-Debergh, “La Décoration picturale du monastère de Saqqara. Essai de reconstitution,” *Miscellanea Coptica/Acta ad archaeologiam et artium historiam pertinentia* 9 (1981): 9–124; idem, “Quelques remarques iconographiques sur la peinture chrétienne à Saqqara,” *Miscellanea Coptica/Acta ad archaeologiam et artium historiam pertinentia*

- 9 (1981): 207–220; M.-H. Rassart-Debergh and J. Debergh, “A propos de trois peintures de Saqqara,” *Miscellanea Coptica/Acta ad archaeologiam et artium historiam pertinentia* 9 (1981): 187–205.
- 14 *Excavations at Saqqara*, 2: 64–65. His most opinionated and unguarded statements assessing the history of the site are actually reserved for the unidentified Arabs who, in his opinion, were the destroyers of the monastery.
- 15 *Excavations at Saqqara*, 3: 8.
- 16 Ibid.
- 17 Henri Munier, “La Sibylla alexandrine chez les Coptes,” *BSAA* 20 (1924): 196–201.
- 18 *Excavations at Saqqara* III, 66–67.
- 19 M. Rassart-Debergh, “L’image de la femme au couvent Saint-Jérémie à Saqqara,” *Le monde copte* 16 (1989): 48–56.
- 20 Birger A. Pearson, *Gnosticism and Christianity in Roman and Coptic Egypt* (New York: T & T Clark International, 2004), 148–150, 163–164.
- 21 *Excavations at Saqqara*, 3: no. 29, 10.
- 22 Tim Vivian, “Ama Sibylla of Saqqara: Prioress or Prophet, Monastic or Mythological Being?” *Bulletin of the Saint Shenouda the Archimandrite Coptic Society* 5 (1998–99): 1–17. Reprinted in Tim Vivian, *Words to Live By: Journeys in Ancient and Modern Monasticism* (Kalamazoo, MI: Cistercian Publications, 2005), 385.
- 23 Ibid., 386.
- 24 Ibid., 387. See the recent discussion of the Saqqara material in Malcolm Choat, “Narratives of Monastic Genealogy in Coptic Inscriptions,” *Religion in the Roman Empire* 1 (2015): 403–430.
- 25 Hugo Lundhaug, “Memory and Early Monastic Literary Practices: A Cognitive Perspective,” *Journal of Cognitive Historiography* 1.1 (2014): 98–120.
- 26 Choat, “Narratives of Monastic Genealogy,” 409–414.
- 27 Nos. 202, 334. Trans. Thompson, “Coptic Inscriptions,” in *Excavations at Saqqara* 4: 59, 105.
- 28 No. 202, *Excavations at Saqqara* 4: 59.
- 29 No. 319. Thompson, “Coptic Inscriptions,” in *Excavations at Saqqara* 4: 99–100.
- 30 Nos. 13, 64, 123, 189, 192, 193, 328. Thompson, “Coptic Inscriptions,” in *Excavations at Saqqara* 3: 32, 47, 63; 4: 55, 56, 103.
- 31 Nos. 2, 179, 207. Grossmann rejected Quibell’s original identification of the large hall north of the church as a hospital or infirmary. However, Andrew Crislip’s work on monastic medicine and care for the sick makes a convincing argument for seeing this space as the “place of sickness.” Crislip, *From Monastery to Hospital*, 146, n. 6; idem, “‘I have chosen sickness’: The controversial function of sickness in early Christian ascetic practice,” in *Asceticism and Its Critics*, ed. Oliver Freiberger (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 179–210.
- 32 No. 227.
- 33 Nos. 104, 132, 148, 317. No. 104 is a dipinto from Room 705 and describes Peter as one who belongs to “our house” in the south country. No. 132 is a dipinto from Room 764 and references the “house of Apa.” No. 148 is a graffito by Colluthus, a watchman “of our house.” No. 317 is a dipinto from Room 1723 about Brother Mena who is “in the house of holy Apa Jeremias.” Trans. Thompson, “Coptic Inscriptions,” in *Excavations at Saqqara* 3: 58, 65, 69; 4: 98–99.
- 34 No. 317.
- 35 To the east and south of the church, Quibell excavated smaller residential areas, but did not always include details on his plans of the features of the rooms. His written description includes discussion of two rooms, 1943 and 2063, which both had ovens.
- 36 *Excavations at Saqqara* 3: 9 and 101.
- 37 *Excavations at Saqqara* 3: 10. Room 713 includes two mud brick ovens and a significant corpus of ceramics.
- 38 *Excavations at Saqqara* 3: 17.
- 39 See Rooms 1835, 1843, and 1858. Quibell, *Excavations at Saqqara* IV, 18 and 20.
- 40 No. 331. Quibell, *Excavations at Saqqara*, IV, 104. The graffito is part of a cryptogram from Room 1794.
- 41 No. 15. Quibell, *Excavations at Saqqara*, III, 33. Antony’s name appears in a broken, inscribed limestone text in high relief.
- 42 A survey of the papyrological evidence and the association with key monastic sites in Thebes is Giorda, *Il Regno di Dio in terra*, 5–10.
- 43 See Chapter 1 for the history of archaeological work at the Holy Topos of Epiphanius.
- 44 As a point of consistency with the naming of other sites and importance to use the nomenclature monastic residents employed, I use the “Holy Topos” instead of the “Monastery of Epiphanius.” Giorda, *Il Regno di Dio in terra*, 16–18. Giorda also adopts this nomenclature.

- 45 Winlock, “The Monastery of Epiphanius at Thebes,” 139.
- 46 Winlock and Crum, *Epiphanius* I: 6–24, Plate I. Subsequent surveys include Doresse, “Monastères coptes aux environs d’Armant en Thébaine,” 327–349; Wilfong, “Western Thebes in the Seventh and Eighth Centuries,” 89–145; Elisabeth O’Connell, “Excavating Christian Western Thebes: A History,” in *Christianity and Monasticism in Upper Egypt: 2 Nag Hammadi-Esna*, eds. Gawdat Gabra and Hany N. Takla (Cairo: American University in Cairo Press, 2010), 253–270.
- 47 Florence Calament, “Correspondance inédite entre moines dans la montagne Thébaine,” in *Études coptes* IX (Paris: De Boccard, 2006): 81–93; idem, “Varia Coptica Thebaica,” *BIFAO* 104 (2004): 39–102; Leslie S. B. MacCoull, “Prophethood, Texts, and Artifacts: The Monastery of Epiphanius,” *GRBS* 39.3 (1998): 307–324; Roland Tefnin, “Archéologie et conservation dans les chapelles de Sennefer (TT96) et Aménénopé (TT29),” *BSFE* 154 (2002): 7–27.
- 48 An overview of the prominent sites and accompanying bibliography is Wipszycka, *Moines et communautés monastiques*, 171–197; Lecuyot and Delattre, “Ermitages de la montagne thébaine,” 419–421; Montserrat and Meskell, “Mortuary Landscape and Religious Landscape at Graeco-Roman Deir el-Medina,” 179–197.
- 49 Edouard Naville, “The Excavations at Deir el Bahari during the Winter, 1894–95,” *Archaeological Report* (1894–1895): 33–37; Włodzimierz Godlewski, “The Late Roman Necropolis in Deir el-Bahari,” in *Graeco-Coptica: Griechen und Kopten im byzantinischen Ägypten*, ed. by Peter Nagel (Wittenberg: Martin-Luther Universität Halle, 1984), 111–119; idem, “Remarques sur la création du monastère de St. Phoebammon à Deir el-Bahari,” *Africana Bulletin* 31 (1982): 107–113. See also MacCoull, “Apa Abraham: Testament of Apa Abraham, Bishop of Hermonthis, for the Monastery of St. Phoibammon near Thebes, Egypt,” 51–58; Giorda, *Il Regno di Dio in terra*, 11–15.
- 50 See discussion in Chapter 2.
- 51 Pascale Ballet, “Le topos de Saint-Marc et son faciès céramique,” in *Actes du huitième Congrès international d’études coptes: Paris, 28 juin–3 juillet 2004*, eds. Nathalie Bosson and Anne Boud’hors (Louvain: Peeters, 2007), 129–140; J. Gascoü, “Documents grecs de Qurnat Mar’i,” *BIFAO* 99 (1999): 201–215; Serge Sauneron, “Les travaux de l’institut français d’archéologie orientale en 1970–71,” *BIFAO* 70 (1971): 250–252; idem, “Les travaux de l’institut français d’archéologie orientale en 1971–72,” *BIFAO* 71 (1972): 206–208; idem, “Les travaux de l’institut français d’archéologie orientale en 1972–1973,” *BIFAO* 73 (1973): 230–231; idem, “Les travaux de l’institut français d’archéologie orientale en 1973–74: Qournet Mar’ei,” *BIFAO* 74 (1974): 204–205; U. Monneret de Villard, “Una chiesa di tipo Georgiano nella necropoli Tebana,” in *Coptic Studies in Honor of Walter Ewing Crum* (Boston: Byzantine Institute, 1950), 495–500; Georges Castel, “Étude d’une momie copte,” in *Hommages à la mémoire de Serge Sauneron 1927–1976: II. Égypte Post-Pharaonique*, ed. by J. Vercoutter (Cairo: IFAO, 1979), 122–143 and pls. 10–17; Wipszycka, *Moines et communautés monastiques*, 187–190.
- 52 Peter Grossmann, “Untersuchungen in Dair ar-Rumi bei Qurna in Oberägypten,” *MDAIK* 30 (1974): 25–30; Guy Lecuyot, “Deir Roumi monastère copte de la Vallée des Reines,” *Dossiers Histoire et Archéologie* 136 (March 1989): 60–63; idem, “Le Deir er-Roumi,” *Le Monde Copte* (1992): 101–106; idem, “The Valley of the Queens in the Coptic Period,” in *Acts of the Fifth International Congress of Coptic Studies*, II: 263–276; Michel Pezín and Guy Lecuyot, “Documents coptes découverts au Deir er-Roumi, dans la Vallée des Reines et le Ouadi du prince Ahmès,” in *Actes du huitième congrès international d’études coptes*, 759–786.
- 53 Tamás A. Bács, “The So-called ‘Monastery of Cyriacus’ at Thebes,” *Egyptian Archaeology* 17 (2000): 34–36; idem, “First Preliminary Report on the Work of the Hungarian Mission in Thebes in Theban Tomb No. 65 (Nebamun/Imiseba),” *MDAIK* 54 (1998): 49–64; Andrea Hasznos, *Coptic Texts from the Monastery of Cyriacus (TT65)* ([Budapest]: ELTE Eötvös kaidó, 2013); Winlock and Crum, *Epiphanius* I, 16–18.
- 54 Guy Lecuyot and Christine Thirard, “L’occupation chrétienne de la montagne thébaine à travers ses vestiges archéologiques,” in *Et maintenant ce ne sont plus que des villages ...Thèbes et sa région aux époques hellénistique, romaine et byzantine, Actes du colloque tenu à Bruxelles les 2 et 3 décembre 2005*, *Papyrologica*

- Bruzellensia*, ed. Alain Delattre and Paul Heilporn (Brussels: Association Égyptologique Reine Élisabeth, 2008), 137–144.
- 55 Guy Lecuyot, “Une nécropole de Thèbes-ouest à l’époque romaine et copte: la Vallée des Reines,” *Kyphi* 2 (1999): 33–61; Alain Delattre, Guy Lecuyot and Catherine Thirard, “L’occupation chrétienne de la montagne thébaine: prospections dans la Vallée des Reines et les vallées adjacents. Rapport préliminaire,” in *Études Coptes X, Douzième Journée d’Études coptes, Lyon, 19–21 mai 2005*, ed. Anne Boud’hors and C. Louis (Paris: De Boccard, 2008), 123–133; Wipszycka, *Moines et communautés monastiques*, 190–196.
- 56 Tomasz Górecki, “Sheikh Abd el-Gurna Coptic Hermitage: First Interim Report,” *PAM* 15 (2004): 263–272; idem, “Sheikh Abd el-Gurna (Hermitage in Tomb 1152) Preliminary Report, 2005,” *PAM* 17 (2005): 263–272; idem, “Sheikh Abd el-Gurna Hermitage in Tomb 1152: Second Season of Excavations, 2004,” *PAM* 16 (2004): 239–243.
- 57 Iwona Antoniuk, “Preliminary Remarks on the Coptic Ostraca from Seasons 2003 and 2004,” *PAM* 16 (2004): 244–247; idem, “Recent Discoveries in the Hermitage of Sheikh Abd el-Gurna: Coptic Codices and Ostraca,” in *Et maintenant ce ne sont plus que des villages: Thèbes et sa région aux époques hellénistique, romaine et byzantine. Actes du colloque tenu à Bruxelles les 2 et 3 décembre 2005*, ed. A. Delattre and P. Heilporn (Brussels: Association égyptologique Reine Élisabeth, 2008), 145–148.
- 58 Chantal Heurtel, “Nouveaux aperçus de la vie anachorétique dans la montagne thébaine: Les ostraca coptes de la tombe d’Aménémopé (TT29),” *Bulletin de la Société française d’Égyptologie* 154 (2002): 29–45; idem, “Que fait Frange dans la cour de la tombe TT 29? Fouilles dans la cour de la tombe TT 29n,” *Études Coptes* VIII (2003): 177–204; idem, “Les prédécesseurs de Frangé: L’occupation de TT29 au VIIe siècle,” *Études Coptes* X (2008): 167–178; idem, “Le petit monde de Frangé: Une microsociété dans la région thébaine au début du VIIIe siècle,” in “*Et maintenant ce ne sont plus que des villages*,” 163–174.
- 59 Anne Boud’hors, “Nouveaux témoignages sur les anachorètes coptes de la montagne thébaine: Les ostraca de la tombe TT29,” in *Memoria: Seminarios de Filología e Historia*, eds. C. Lopez Ruiz and S. Torallas Tover (Madrid: CSIC, Instituto de Filología, 2002), 153–155; idem, “L’apport de papyrus postérieurs à la conquête arabe pour la datation des ostraca coptes de la tombe TT29,” in *From al-Andalus to Khurasan: Documents from the Medieval Muslim World*, eds. P. M. Sijpesteijn et al. (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 115–126; idem and Chantal Heurtel, “The Coptic Ostraca from the Tomb of Ananemope,” *EA* 20 (2002): 7–9; idem, *Les ostraca coptes de la TT 29: Autour du moine Frangé* (Bruxelles: CReA-Patrimoine, 2010).
- 60 Günter Burkard, Michael Mackensen, and Daniel Polz, “Die spätantike/koptische Klosteranlage Deir el-Bachit in Dra’ Abu el-Naga (Oberägypten). Erster Vorbericht,” *MDAIK* 59 (2003): 41–65; Ina Eichner and Ulrike Fauerbach, “Die spätantike/koptische Klosteranlage Deir el-Bachit in Dra’ Abu el-Naga (Oberägypten). Zweiter Vorbericht,” *MDAIK* 61 (2005): 139–152; Ina Eichner, Thomas Beckh and Johanna Sigl, “Das Kloster Deir el-Bachit in Theben-West: Ergebnisse und Perspektiven,” in *Texte-Theben-Tönfragmente: Festschrift für Günter Burkard*, ed. Dieter Kessler (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2009), 92–107.
- 61 Ina Eichner, “Bücher und Bucheinbände des Paulosklosters (Deir el-Bachît) in Theben-West/Oberägypten,” in *Byzantium as Bridge between West and East: Proceedings of the International Conference, Vienna, 3rd–5th May 2012*, eds. Christian Gastgeber and Falko Daim (Wien: Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 2015), 241–250.
- 62 André J. Veldmeijer, *Sandals, Shoes and Other Leatherwork from the Coptic Monastery of Deir el-Bachit* (Leiden: Sidestone Press, 2011), 38–46.
- 63 S. Lösch, E. Hower-Tilmann, and A. Zink, “Mummies and Skeletons from the Coptic Monastery Complex Deir el-Bachit in Thebes-West, Egypt,” *Anthropol Anz* 70.1 (2013): 27–41.
- 64 Winlock and Crum, *Epiphanius* I: viii.
- 65 Ibid., I:125.
- 66 Ibid.
- 67 For more on itinerant monastics, see Dietz, *Wandering Monks, Virgins, and Pilgrims*, 75–79; Caner, *Wandering, Begging Monks*, 47–49. Wandering or itinerant monks are the most difficult to identify in the archaeological record as they often relied on the hospitality of the other monastic communities and ecclesiastical institutions.

- 68 Winlock and Crum, *Epiphanius* I: 126. The term originates in the Palestinian monastic tradition. Y. Hirshfeld, *The Early Byzantine Monastery at Khirbet ed-Deir in the Judean Desert: The Excavations in 1981–87* (Jerusalem: Hebrew University, 1999), 6.
- 69 *PKRU* 75. Trans. Winlock and Crum, *Epiphanius*, II: Appendix III, 343–348. Some texts made their way into private and museum collections before the formal excavations. M. Krause, “Zur Verfassung koptischer Klöster: Die Abtswahl/Abtsernennung in koptischen Klöstern,” in *Themelia: Spätantike und koptologische Studien*, eds. M. Krause and S. Schaten (Wiesbaden: Dr. Ludwig Reichert Verlag, 1998), 225–231.
- 70 Part of the qualifications for residency included that a monk be at least twenty years of age in order to reside at the dwelling places.
- 71 *PKRU* 75. Ibid., 344. O’Connell, “Transforming Monumental Landscapes,” 266.
- 72 *PKRU* 75, 65.
- 73 *PLond.* 1.77, 25. Trans. MacCoull, “*Apa Abraham*,” 51–58. The seventh-century Greek testament states that Victor will inherit the “holy monastery” from Apa Abraham, who identifies the site both as a holy monastery and a holy mountain.
- 74 Brooks Hedstrom, “Your Cell Will Teach You All Things,” 223.
- 75 Ibid. O’Connell explores this idea further in her discussion as to the mutability of the tombs as places for residency, “Transforming Monumental Landscapes,” 273.
- 76 For monastic residences see *PMon.Epiph.* 171, 172, 181, 296, 334, 336, 370, 451, 459, 524.
- 77 *PMon.Epiph.* 370.
- 78 *PMon.Epiph.* 205.
- 79 Ibid. 466.
- 80 Ibid. 652.
- 81 Ibid. 676, 678, 679, 680, 681.
- 82 Designated as Cells A, B, and C. See Winlock and Crum, *Epiphanius* I: Plate II.
- 83 Thirard, “Le Monastère d’Épiphanie à Thèbes,” 370.
- 84 Ibid., I:32–34.
- 85 Ibid., I:34.
- 86 Ibid., I:37–38.
- 87 Winlock and Crum, *Epiphanius* I:45–50.
- 88 Flax was referenced frequently in the ostraca retrieved from the site. For a historical context see Philip Mayerson, “The Role of Flax in Roman and Fatimid Egypt,” *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 56 (1997): 201–207.
- 89 At Cell A, Winlock recovered acacia pods that could be used for the dyeing of cloth and the tanning of leather. An introduction to pharaonic leather production is P. Nicholson and I. Shaw, eds., *Ancient Egyptian Materials and Technology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 299–319.
- 90 The area around Cell A contained several clues to the production of rope. *PMon.Epiph.* 113 specifically asks for bundles to be sent from this area. Halfa grass and date palm fiber are both used in the design of rope at the site. Halfa grass and summer grass were also used in the production of mats and baskets. Fiber and reed remains were found in the East buildings, Cell A, and Cell B. The woven mats were used for comfort as a floor covering and were also used in the burials to place over the body of the deceased.
- 91 Winlock and Crum, *Monastery of Epiphanius* I:61–63. The agricultural activities at the site are not clear. A well was certainly necessary for the monks, but there does not appear to be a garden or large farm associated with the site. The remains of a *nôrag*, made of acacia wood, were part of the sled dragged by cattle for threshing. Since the beam was reused within the actual construction of a dwelling, it is not possible to determine whether it was used in an earlier period by the inhabitants for threshing. References to a ploughshare (*PMon.Epiph.* 546), a spade (*PMon.Epiph.* 546), and a dibble (*PMon.Epiph.* 319) suggest that the monks were aware of agricultural activities.
- 92 *PMon.Epiph.* 532.
- 93 Lucien Regnault, *The Day-to-Day Life of the Desert Fathers in Fourth-Century Egypt* (Petersham, MA: St. Bede’s Publications, 1999), 96–102.
- 94 *PMon.Epiph.* 85.
- 95 Joanna Sigl, “Pits with Crossbars – Investigations on Loom-Remains from Coptic Egypt,” in *Proceedings of the Fourth Central European Conference of Young Egyptologists*, eds. Kata Endreffy and András Gulyás (Budapest: NKTH, 2007), 357–372; W. F. Volbach, *Late Antique Coptic and Islamic Textiles of Egypt* (New York: E. Weyhe, 1926).
- 96 Winlock and Crum, *Monastery of Epiphanius* I, 151.

- 97 Godlewski, *Deir el-Bahri V*, 47–49. E. Baraize, “Compte-rendu des travaux exécutés à Deir el Medineh,” *ASAE* 13 (1914): 35.
- 98 Each apron also had an interior pocket that was next to the chest of the ascetic. Crum and White did not speculate on the purpose of these shield-like pockets. Nothing noteworthy, such as scrapes of papyri, coins, seeds, or tools, was mentioned in the report.
- 99 R.-G. Coquin and M. Martin, “Wadi Sarjah,” *CE* 7:2312. Jean Doresse, *Les anciens monastères coptes de Moyenne-Égypte (du Gebel-et-Tèir à Kôm-Ishgaou) d’après l’archéologie et l’hagiographie* (Lausanne: Institut d’archéologie yverdonnoise, 2000). Both Lycopolis and Antaiopolis were nome capitals and important centers in Late Antique Egypt.
- 100 Arietta Papaconstantinou, “Egypt,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Late Antiquity*, ed. Scott F. Johnson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 203–204.
- 101 Katherine Blouin, *Triangular Landscapes: Environment, Society, and the State in the Nile Delta under Roman Rule* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014).
- 102 Rosemaire Klemm and Dietrich D. Klemm, *Stones and Quarries in Ancient Egypt* (London: British Museum Press, 2008).
- 103 A similar pattern exists at Dayr al-Balazah and at the numerous monastic settlements in Thebes where a single tomb becomes the base for the extension of several structures of a settlement.
- 104 An example of a modest site for communal worship is found at Jabal Tayr in Kharga Oasis. The site was apparently a local shrine or chapel dedicated to Apa Mena, the famous saint revered at the pilgrimage center of Abu Mena, just west of Alexandria. Eugene Cruz-Urbe, Peter Piccione, and Jennifer Westerfeld, “Kharga Oasis Coptic Graffiti Project: Preliminary Report of the 2005 Field Season,” *JSSEA* 31 (2004): 37–48; D. Devauchelle and G. Wagner, *Les graffites du Gebel Tèir. Textes démotiques et grecs* (Cairo: IFAO, 1984).
- 105 See Chapter 1 for the history of archaeological work at the Monastery of Apa Thomas.
- 106 Campbell Thompson, “Byzantine Research Fund: Excavations at Wadi Sarga,” 187. The final publication of the work was not completed, although Campbell Thompson had hoped in 1922 that his publication of the excavation would quickly follow.
- 107 Campbell Thompson, “The Excavations at Wadi Sarga,” 1–2.
- 108 *Ibid.*, 2.
- 109 *Ibid.*
- 110 O’Connell, “R. Campbell Thompson’s 1913/14 Excavation at Wadi Sarga,” Fig. 21 of North houses, Rooms 1–33.
- 111 Campbell Thompson assumed the construction of the churches to be the work of the community, which reflected his lack of familiarity with quarry activities and the repurposing the space for Christian usage. Campbell Thompson, “The Excavations at Wadi Sarga,” 2.
- 112 Gertrude J. M. van Loon, “The Meeting of Abraham and Melchizedek and the Communion of the Apostles,” in *Coptic Studies on the Threshold of a New Millennium. II. Proceedings of the Seventh International Congress of Coptic Studies Leiden 2000*, eds. M. Immerzeel and J. van der Vliet (Leuven: Peeters, 2004), 1378–1380.
- 113 Campbell Thompson, “The Excavations at Wadi Sarga,” 4.
- 114 O’Connell offers the following history of the settlement: “The site in general fits into a pattern of settlement wherein monastic foundations on the desert escarpment were established in the 5th–8th centuries and thereafter largely abandoned ... in favour of centralised, often walled, communities on the desert plain below in the Medieval period” (O’Connell, “Wadi Sarga 1913/14”), 136–137; *idem*, “Settlements and Cemeteries in Late Antique Egypt: An Introduction,” in *Egypt in the First Millennium AD: Perspectives from New Fieldwork*, ed. E. R. O’Connell (Leuven: Brill, 2014), 8–11.
- 115 Campbell Thompson, “The Excavations at Wadi Sarga,” 3.
- 116 *Ibid.*
- 117 *Ibid.*, 3–4.
- 118 See Rooms 1, 3, 11b, 18b, and 33. Plan of Wadi Sarga North houses in O’Connell, “R. Campbell Thompson’s 1913/14 Excavation at Wadi Sarga,” fig. 21.
- 119 Building nos. 41–42, rooms d and i; O’Connell, “R. Campbell Thompson’s 1913/14 Excavation at Wadi Sarga,” fig. 35.
- 120 Campbell Thompson, “The Excavations at Wadi Sarga,” 4–5.
- 121 Crum, “The Monastic Settlement and Its Inhabitants,” 9.
- 122 *Ibid.*, 10.
- 123 *Ibid.*

- 124 Campbell Thompson notes that excavations below floor levels of the houses only contained sand, and thus the houses were not built on earlier structures.
- 125 *O.Sarga* 164. Trans. Crum and Bell, 134–135. *P.Ryl.* IV 289.
- 126 Clarke, *Christian Antiquities in the Nile*, 174.
- 127 The list includes Thomas, Peter, Joseph, Anoup, Pamoun, German, and Justus.
- 128 *O.Sarga* 100. Trans. Crum and Bell, 93–94.
- 129 Crum notes that *manshōpe* “must comprise a group of monastic buildings, as it seems to do at Saqqara and Bawit” (Crum and Bell, 94, no. 1).
- 130 *O.Sarga* 153. Trans. Crum and Bell, 127.
- 131 In Crum’s introduction to the section “Stelae and Graffiti,” he explains that he used Campbell Thompson’s notebooks to transcribe the graffiti copied from the “church, the houses and the caves of Wadi Sarga” (57). Whether the graffiti are truly inscribed texts is doubtful, as later Crum refers to the texts as “frescoed graffiti,” and therefore they should be considered diptini (57). Finally, Crum clarifies that “[t]he graffiti are, as elsewhere, not epitaphs, but simply invocations, more or less informal: sometimes enclosed in a rough frame, sometimes irregularly scribbled on the plaster” (Crum and Bell, 58).
- 132 “Dayr Apa Phoebammon,” *CE*, 779. Martin Krause, “Zwei Phoibammon-Kloster in Theben-West,” *MDAIK* 37 (1981): 261–266; idem, “Die Beziehungen zwischen den beiden Phoibammon-Klöstern auf dem thebanischen Westufer,” *BSAC* 27 (1985); idem, “Das christliche Theben: Neuere Arbeiten und Funde,” *BSAC* 24 (1982): 21–33; Otto Meinardus, *Christian Egypt: Ancient and Modern* (Cairo: The American University in Cairo Press, 1977), 428; Leslie S. B. MacCoull, “Papyrus Fragments from the Monastery of Phoebammon,” in *Proceedings of the Sixteenth International Congress of Papyrology: New York, 24–31 July 1980*, eds. Roger Bagnall et al. (Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1981), 491–498.
- 133 Much confusion surrounded the two monastic communities until the work of Martin Krause, who was able to make the case for two distinct communities. The northern monastery, Dayr al-Bahri, was founded at the end of the sixth century. Dorsee, “Monastères coptes aux environs d’Armant,” 344; Martin Krause, “Zur Lokalisierung und Datierung koptischer Denkmäler. Das Tafelbild des Bischofs Abraham,” *ZÄS* 97 (1971): 109–111.
- 134 Godlewski, *Deir el Bahri* V: 62.
- 135 See Chapter 2 for the history of archaeological work at the Topos of Apa Phoibammon.
- 136 A second monastic settlement in Thebes, located on the terraces of the mortuary temple of Queen Hatshepsut (Dayr al-Bahri), was also known by the name Topos of Apa Phoibammon. See Godlewski, *Deir el Bahri* V, for publication on the documentation of the monastic settlement at the New Kingdom mortuary temple.
- 137 Bachatly, *Phoebammon*, II: Coptic Graffiti Nos. 20, 28, 34, 43, 64, 68, 78, 154, 175 and Greek Graffiti No. 17.
- 138 Coptic Graffiti No. 29. *Le monastère de Phoebammon*, II, 44–45.
- 139 Krause, “Zwei Phoibammon-Kloster,” 264.
- 140 Coptic Graffiti No. 18. *Le monastère de Phoebammon*, II, 40.
- 141 Coptic Graffiti No. 43. *Le monastère de Phoebammon*, II, 50.
- 142 Greek Graffiti No. 2. *Le monastère de Phoebammon*, II, 6–7.
- 143 The following discussion is based on my observations at the site on a visit in 2008 and analysis of the published plans and photographs.
- 144 *Phoebammon* I:18.
- 145 *Phoebammon* I:18.
- 146 Walters, *Monastic Archaeology in Egypt*, 9.
- 147 Ibid.
- 148 See Chapter 2 for the history of archaeological work at Kellia.
- 149 Grossmann, *Christliche Architektur in Ägypten*, 262–266; 491–499.
- 150 Jean Jacquet, “Un ermitage des Kellia, le kôm 4, contribution à l’étude de la vie matérielle des moines,” *BIFAO* 108 (2008): 206.
- 151 Pascale Ballet, “Céramique tardive des Kellia et présence islamique,” in *Le site monastique copte des Kellia: Sources historiques et explorations archéologiques*, ed. P. Bridel (Genève: Mission suisse d’archéologie copte, 1986), 299–310; idem, “La céramique des Kellia. Fouilles récentes de l’institut français d’archéologie orientale,” in *Coptic Studies*, ed. W. Godlewski (Varsovie: PWN, 1990), 41–47.
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- 159 D. Weidemann, *Explorations aux Qouçoûr el-Izeila* 1981, 415;
- 160 Pierre Corboud, "L'oratoire et les niches-oratoires: Les lieux de la prière," in *Le site monastique copte des Kellia*, 85–92.
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- 162 Brenk, "Monasteries as Rural Settlements," 447–476.
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- 171 Favre, *Description*, 276.
- 172 Rugs were also painted on the floor at QR 227 in an unusual triple-room hall (see QR 201). F. Bonnet, P. Bridel, S. Favre, and G. Nogara, "Ermitage QR 227," in *Qouçour er-Roubâ'îyât*, 58–66.
- 173 W.Vycichl, "Partie II: Les Inscriptions arabes de l'ermitage QR 306," in *Qouçour er-Roubâ'îyât*, 315–320. No. 92 clearly is written by a Muslim as the inscription is the *shahada*. For a discussion of where this statement of witness is found within Islamic spaces, see Timothy Insoll, *The Archaeology of Islam* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1999), chapter 5. J. Renard provides specific examples of marking Islamic sacred space by Sufis in *Seven Doors to Islam: Spirituality and the Religious Life of Muslims* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996), 28–29.
- 174 Nos. 4 and 75.
- 175 Nos. 17, 37, 53.
- 176 Nos. 53, 54, and 55 accompany 56 on the southern jamb in the entranceway of Room 4 that opened to the prayer area 5.
- 177 J. Partyka, who translated the inscriptions and recorded the similarities between hands, suggests that the author of this inscription is the same as that of no. 75, which includes a date of 702–703.
- 178 Ballet, Bosson, and Rassart-Debergh 2003: 204–306.
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- 184 Judith Alder, "The Holy Man as Traveler and Travel Attraction: Early Christian Asceticism and the Moral Problematic of Modernity," in *From Medieval Pilgrimage to Religious Tourism*, eds. W. Swatos and L. Tomasini (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2002), 25–50.
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- 186 Wipszyscka maintains that the level of sophistication of the buildings would preclude monastic builders from being responsible for the design of the structures.
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- 188 Brakke, "Macarius's Quest and Ours," 239–251; Rubenson, "Response: To Tell the Truth: Fact and Fiction in Early Monastic Stories," 317–324.
- 189 Jules Leroy, *Les peintures des couvents du désert d'Esna* (Cairo: Institut français d'archéologie orientale, 1975).
- 190 See Chapter 2 for a history of the archaeological work at Esna.
- 191 Excavations at 'Adaïma, to the north of Esna, uncovered similar semisubterranean monastic dwellings, but were not studied or published with the same degree of analysis. They are, therefore, not known very well, although a future publication is being prepared by A. Boud'hours and M.-H. Rutschowskaya. Some of the buildings at Kellia in the Egyptian Delta may have semisubterranean elements, but the entireties of the structures were not built underground.
- 192 Sauneron *Esna*, 4: 7–8. Sauneron regards the lack of any Arabic inscriptions as indicating the settlement did not extend into the eighth century.
- 193 Sauneron, *Esna*, 4: 11–12.
- 194 Sauneron, *Esna*, 1: 100. No. 49.
- 195 Włodzimierz Godlewski, "Naqlun: Monastery Never to Be Forgotten," in *Spätantike Bibliotheken: Leben und Lesen in dem frühen Klöstern Ägyptens*, eds. Harald Froschauer and Cornelia Römer (Wien: Phoibos Verlag, 2008), 71–80. CE 845a–847a.
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- 199 Godlewski has published preliminary reports in the annual publication for *PAM*. The first

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- 204 It is beyond the scope of this discussion to explore this question of whether Naqlun was a dual monastery with two different organizations. For more on this question, see the discussion in Ewa Wipszycka, “Les rapports entre les monastères et les laures à la lumière des fouilles de Naqlun (Fayoum),” *Studia Ephemeridis Augustinianum* 52 (1996): 372–403.
- 205 *The Life of Samuel of Kalamun*, 9. Trans. Alcock, 83–84, no. 72.
- 206 Otto Meinardus asserted the monastic residences were in use from the fourth century and abandoned by the seventh century. His claim was made on the basis of the evolutionary model that simpler and more modest structures point to the first periods of monastic site design and reflect the accounts of monastic literature. Otto Meinardus, “The Laura of Naqlun,” *Bulletin de la Société de Géographie d’Égypte* 40 (1967): 173–186.
- 207 Wipszycka, “Les rapports entre les monastères et les laures,” 376.
- 208 *P.Naqlun* 22. 9–10. Trans. Derda, 108.
- 209 *P.Naqlun* 21. (μονάζοντι καὶ προσετώς Πύργου καὶ τοῦ ἁγίου Φοιβάμμου(ωνος) [ῥους] κελλῶν). Trans. Derda, 104.
- 210 Derda presents the rationale for equating the name “Tower” to a residence for the presence of a storage building that is now missing, along with the private kitchen, at Hermitage 89. Derda, *Deir el-Naqlun: The Greek Papyri*, vol. 2, 92–97.
- 211 Godlewski, “Naqlun 1989–1992,” 187.
- 212 In Alcock’s commentary he raises questions about what the meaning could be behind the decision to use *manshōpe* and whether it refers to a collection of apartments or cells. In his English translation he renders the expression as “cell/cells.”
- 213 Godlewski, “Deir el Naqlun (Nekloni) 1986–1987,” 190; Meinardus, “The Laura of Naqlun,” 174–177; idem, *Christian Egypt*, 449–457.
- 214 For an overview of the seventh and eighth centuries in Thebes, see Wilfong, “Western Thebes in the Seventh and Eighth Centuries,” 89–147.
- 215 Tomasz Derda, “Polish Excavations at Deir el-Naqlun 1986–1991: Interdependence of Archaeology and Papyrology,” in *Proceedings of the 20th International Congress of Papyrologists Copenhagen, 23–29 August, 1992*, ed. Adam Bülow-Jacobsen (Copenhagen: Museum Trusculanum Press, 1994), 124–130.
- 216 Most reports on the dwellings suggest that many more residences were probably present, but have not been recognized yet. Dobrowolski, “The Monastic Complex of Naqlun,” 314–315.
- 217 Godlewski, “Deir el Naqlun 1988–89,” 208.
- 218 Godlewski sees this form as a simplified version of the earliest design of monastic residences at Kellia and Esna. See Descœudres, “L’architecture,” 37–40 (no. 4), fig. 12; Sauneron, *Les ermitages du desert d’Esna*, II, no. 5.
- 219 An analysis of the dipinti from Dayr al-Naqlun is still to be produced. For dipinti in Hermitage 89, see Włodzimierz Godlewski, “Deir el-Naqlun, 1990,” *PAM* 2 (1991): 50.
- 220 Godlewski, “Deir el-Naqlun, 1990,” 48–53.
- 221 Godlewski, “Deir el Naqlun 1988–89,” 206.
- 222 This hermitage was excavated between 1988 and 1989. Godlewski, “Naqlun 1989–92,” 183–195; Godlewski, “Deir el Naqlun 1988–89,” 203–209; K. Urbaniak-Walczak, “Deir el-Naqlun: Die koptischen Texte aus der Ermitage Nr. 25,” *JJP* 29 (1999): 93–136.
- 223 Most notably at Kellia, Wadi Natrun, and Dayr Abu Fanah.
- 224 Remains of pegs or beams for hanging such portable doors or other items were found in the debris of the rooms (Godlewski, “Deir el Naqlun 1988–89,” 208). Analysis of the pegs at Kellia suggests that bone or horn pegs could have many

- functions for holding clothes, lamps, or even warps for weaving. Several horn pegs are also present in the excavated rooms of residences from John the Little's community in Wadi al-Natrun.
- 225 Godlewski points out that while ostraca are abundant at other monastic sites such as the Holy Topos of Epiphanius and in the Late Antique village of Jeme, papyrus was much more available in this region, explaining the reduced presence of ostraca (Godlewski, "Naqlun 1988–92," 186).
- 226 Godlewski, "Deir el Naqlun 1988–89," 219–220.
- 227 Derda, "Deir el-Naqlun 1986–91," 130.
- 228 Derda presents the rationale for equating the name "Tower" with a residence for the presence of a storage building that is now missing, along with the private kitchen, at Hermitage 89. Derda, *Deir el-Naqlun: The Greek Papyri*, vol. 2, 92–97.
- CONCLUSIONS
- 1 *PCLT*4. Trans. Schiller, *Ten Coptic Legal Texts*, 38–41.
 - 2 Bjørnar Olsen, "Material Culture after Text: Re-Membering Things," *Norwegian Archaeological Review* 36.2 (2003): 87.
 - 3 Olsen, "Material Culture after Text," 100.
 - 4 Ingold, "The Temporality of the Landscape," 153–155.
 - 5 Oliver J. T. Harris and John Robb, "Body Worlds and Their History: Some Working Concepts," in *The Body in History: Europe from the Paleolithic to the Future*, ed. John Robb and Oliver J. T. Harris (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 18.
 - 6 Olsen, "Material Culture after Text," 90.
 - 7 Olsen, "Material Culture after Text," 91.
 - 8 It was the rare monastic individual who could eschew clothing, food, and shelter. Mary of Egypt and Onophrius are two examples of monastic models for this mode of total denial of all comfort and protection.
 - 9 Dayr Abu Darag, associated with John Climachus of Sinai, is located just north of the monasteries of St. Antony and St. Paul by the Red Sea. Victor Ghica, Sylvie Marchand, and Antigone Marangou, "Les ermitages d'Abu Daraq revisités," *BIFAO* 108 (2008): 115–163; A. L. Fontaine, "Les ruines du Bir Abou Darag sur le Golfe de Suez," *Bulletin de la Société d'Etudes Historiques et Géographiques de l'Isthme de Suez* 6 (1955–1956): 55–83; M. Martin, "Abou Darag dans la Montagne de St. Antoine," *BIFAO* 70 (1971): 174–189.
 - 10 Jean Doresse's 1971 dissertation, *Les anciens monastères coptes de Moyenne-Égypte (du Gebel et-Teir à Kôm Ishgaou) d'après l'archéologie et l'hagiographie* (Lausanne: Institut d'archéologie yverdonnoise, 2000), had great potential to change the field, but it was not published until 2000.
 - 11 Ewa Wipszycka, "Contribution of Archaeology to the History of Egyptian Monasticism," trans. Tim and Kim Vivian, *CCR* 19.4 (1998): 99. Translation is from the French lecture published as "Apports de l'archéologie à l'histoire du monachisme égyptien," in *The Spirituality of Ancient Monasticism: Acts of the International Colloquium, Cracow-Tyniec, 16–19.11 1994*, ed. Marek Starowieyski (Krakow: Tyniec, 1995), 63–78.
 - 12 Choat, "Narratives of Monastic Genealogy in Coptic Inscriptions," 403–407; Lundhaug, "Memory and Early Monastic Literary Practices," 98–120.
 - 13 Stefan Timm, *Das christlich-koptische Ägypten in arabischer Zeit*, 7 vols. (Wiesbaden: Ludwig Reichert, 1984–2007); Karl-Heinz Brune, *Index zu Das christlich-koptische Ägypten in arabischer Zeit (Stefan Timm)* (Wiesbaden: Dr. Ludwig Reichert, 2007).
 - 14 William M. Flinders Petrie, *Ten Years' Digging in Egypt* (London: The Religious Tract Society, 1900), 12 and fig. 2. He includes a hand-drawn sketch of his residence.
 - 15 Paul Lane, "The Material Culture of Memory," in *The Qualities of Time: Anthropological Approaches*, eds. Wendy James and David Mills (New York: Berg, 2005), 21.
 - 16 Ibid.
 - 17 See Scott Bucking, "Now You See It, Now You Don't: The Dynamics of Archaeological and Epigraphic Landscapes from Coptic Egypt," in *Archaeologies of Text: Archaeology, Technology, and Ethics*, eds. Matthew T. Rutz and Morag M. Kersel (Oxford: Oxbow Books, 2014), 59–79; O'Connell, "Transforming Monumental Landscapes," 239–273; Jennifer Westerfeld, "Christian Perspectives on Pharaonic Religion: The Representation of Paganism in Coptic Literature," *JARCE* 40 (2003): 5–13; idem, "Landscapes of Memory: Pharaonic Sacred Space in the Coptic Imagination" (Ph.D. diss., University of Chicago, 2010).

- 18 Westerfeld, “Christian Perspective on Pharaonic Religion,” 12.
- 19 Jennifer Westerfeld, “Saints in the Caesareum: Remembering Temple-Conversion in Late Antique Hermopolis,” in *Memory and Urban Religion in the Ancient World*, eds. Martin Bommas, Juliette Harrisson, Phoebe Roy, and Elena Theodorakopoulou (London: Bloomsbury, 2012), 59–86.
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- 21 Lane, “The Material Culture of Memory,” 22.
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- 23 Ibid.
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- 9 View of the Main Church of the Monastery of Apa Jeremias at Saqqara looking east toward the Nile with a footpath visible across the inundated fields connecting the site to the village to the east. After J. Quibell, *Saqqara III*, 1909, plate II.

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- 62 H. Winlock, *The Metropolitan Museum of Art Bulletin* 10.7 (1915): figure 6, negative E239. Photo courtesy of the Metropolitan Museum of Art.
- 63 H. Winlock and W. Crum, *The Monastery of Epiphanius*, plate V, A, 1926, negative E24. Photo courtesy of the Metropolitan Museum of Art.
- 64 H. Winlock and W. Crum, *The Monastery of Epiphanius*, plate VIII, 1926, negative E42. Photo courtesy of the Metropolitan Museum of Art.
- 65 Darlene L. Brooks Hedstrom.
- 66 H. Winlock and W. Crum, *The Monastery of Epiphanius*, plate IV, 1926, negative E54. Photo courtesy of the Metropolitan Museum of Art.
- 67 Published in 1922 for the W. Crum and H. I. Bell *Wadi Sarga: Coptic and Greek Texts from the Excavations Undertaken by the Byzantine Research Account*. Courtesy of the Trustees of the British Museum.
- 68 Courtesy of the Trustees of the British Museum.
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- 70 AES Ar. 719. Courtesy of the Trustees of the British Museum.
- 71 Darlene L. Brooks Hedstrom.
- 72 Darlene L. Brooks Hedstrom.
- 73 Darlene L. Brooks Hedstrom.
- 74 Darlene L. Brooks Hedstrom.

- 75 Drawing by J. Dobrowolski. Courtesy of Włodzimierz Godlweski.
- 76 Drawing by J. Dobrowolski. Courtesy of Włodzimierz Godlweski.
- 77 Drawing by Sz. Maślak. Courtesy of Włodzimierz Godlweski.
- 78 Photo by Jean Clédât, EPHE C2218. Courtesy of the École Pratique
des Hautes Études, Paris.
- 79 Courtesy of the Egypt Exploration Fund.
- 80 Darlene L. Brooks Hedstrom.

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Coptic Terms

Apa (father), 201
 Auēt (group of people), 121
 Baki (city), 79
 Bēb (natural cave), 80, 128, 133–134, 240, 322n103
 Blje (pottery), 184
 Bounos (hill), 133–134, 240
 Cobt (wall), 182
 Daeie/Daie (desert), 82–84, 146, 174–175
 Diakon (steward), 134–135, 137
 Ēi (house), 124–126, 131–132, 174, 212
 Eia (ravine or valley), 80, 133–134, 240
 Eišhe (agricultural field), 79
 Heneete (community), 108, 121, 123–125, 274
 Hiē (road), 134
 Joe (wall), 182
 Kēpe (vault), 210–212
 Kōt (to build), 182
 Laura (laura), 121, 123–124, 239
 Ma (place), 121–122, 126, 130, 134, 136, 320n57
 Manshōpe (dwelling place), 98, 122, 126, 128, 134, 136, 146, 163, 210–212, 240–241, 251, 253, 256, 261, 264, 268, 273, 289, 320n56, 322n103
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 Neinoč nhi (Great House), 174
 Ohe (yard), 136
 Oikomenos (house manager), 125, 135, 137
 Oikoumenē (inhabited world), 79
 Ōne (stone), 80, 121, 183
 Penkōte (territory), 84
 Petra (rock or stone), 80, 121, 125, 251, 253, 318n22

Purgos (tower), 133, 240
 Ri (room, cell), 125–128, 130–132, 210, 241
 Ro (door), 184
 Šafe (desert or destroyed land), 119
 Sbe (door), 184
 Še (wood), 184
 Šō (sand), 80
 Šōf (to destroy), 82, 175
 Soouhs (assembly), 121, 123–124
 Šōte (cistern), 184
 Šoušt (window), 184
 Sunagōgē (congregation), 123–124, 170, 174
 Temdahet (mortar), 183
 Terkasia (workshop), 136
 Terpoce (fired brick), 183
 Time (village), 79, 146
 Tōōbe (brick), 98, 182
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 Apotaktikos (city-dwelling monks, renouncers), 135
 Askesis (training), 142
 Bounos (hill), 133
 Chora (cultivated land), 100
 Dais (canopy), 208
 Diakon (steward), 134
 Dōma (house), 125, 184

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 Ekklesia (assembly, church), 121
 Eremos (desert), 81, 123, 144, 147
 Eukteria (oratory), 292n13
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 Lithos (stone), 80, 183
 Makrotera eremos (Inner Desert), 81
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 Monachos (monk, solitary one), 253
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 Oikomenos (house manager),
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 Oikoumenē (inhabited world), 79
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 Philoponeia (confraternity), 102
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 Plēsin erēmos (outer desert), 81
 Plinthos (fired brick), 183
 Polis (city), 79
 Pyrgos (tower), 133
 Sanis (wood), 184
 Semneion (sanctuary), 144
 Spelaion (natural cave), 80
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 Thua (mortar), 183
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 Xenodocheion (hostel), 104

Arabic Terms

Furn (oven)/pl. afrān, 195
 Jabal (mountain), 122
 Kānūn (stove)/pl. kawānīn, 195–196
 Khamsīn (sandstorm), 86–87
 Khūrus (partition in church separating
 nave from sanctuary), 203
 Kom (mound), 201
 Manshubiya (dwelling place), 125
 Wadi (ravine), 80

Egyptian Terms

dšrt (desert), 139
 ḥmsi (sit), 320n56
 ḥwt (house), 124
 ḥwt-ntr (temple), 124
 t3 dšr (sacred land), 139
 tw (mountain), 317n3
 w'b (a type of priest), 324n23

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